



Learn. Develop. Succeed.

UNDERSTANDING **NEURODIVERSITY**

Behavioural Challenges, Mental Health
and Learning





Land Acknowledgement

We are privileged to be gathered here on the unceded, traditional, ancestral lands of the x^wməθk^wə́yəm (Musqueam), Sk̓wx̓wú7mesh (Squamish) and səlilwətaɬ (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations.



About LDS

Learn. Develop. Succeed.



Individualized instruction



Serving learners aged 3 - adults



BC nonprofit charity



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Our Talk

1. Neurodiversity
2. Neurodiversity and Regulation
3. Factors of Regulation
4. Regulation and Behaviour
5. Strategies for Regulation



Neurodiversity



Neurodivergent: the natural variance of brain function and ways of processing information. An umbrella term for conditions such as ADHD, Autism, dyslexia, etc.

Neurotypical: brain functions and ways of processing information seen as “standard” (i.e., the opposite of neurodivergent).

Neurodiversity: the full spectrum of brain-based differences.

Neurodiversity paradigm: the perspective or approach that states that neurodiversity is a natural and valuable form of human diversity and that the idea of a “normal” brain is culturally constructed.

Neurodiversity movement: a social justice movement that supports equality, respect, and societal inclusion for neurodivergent individuals.





- Anxiety
- Depression
- PTSD
- ADHD
- Sensory processing disorder

- Cerebral Palsy
- Autism (ASD)
- Speech delays
- Auditory processing disorder

- Learning differences like dyslexia, dysgraphia, dyscalculia, and more



**Brain-based differences are
natural and valuable forms of
human diversity.**



Neurodiversity and Regulation



Terms of Regulation

more/less

dysregulated



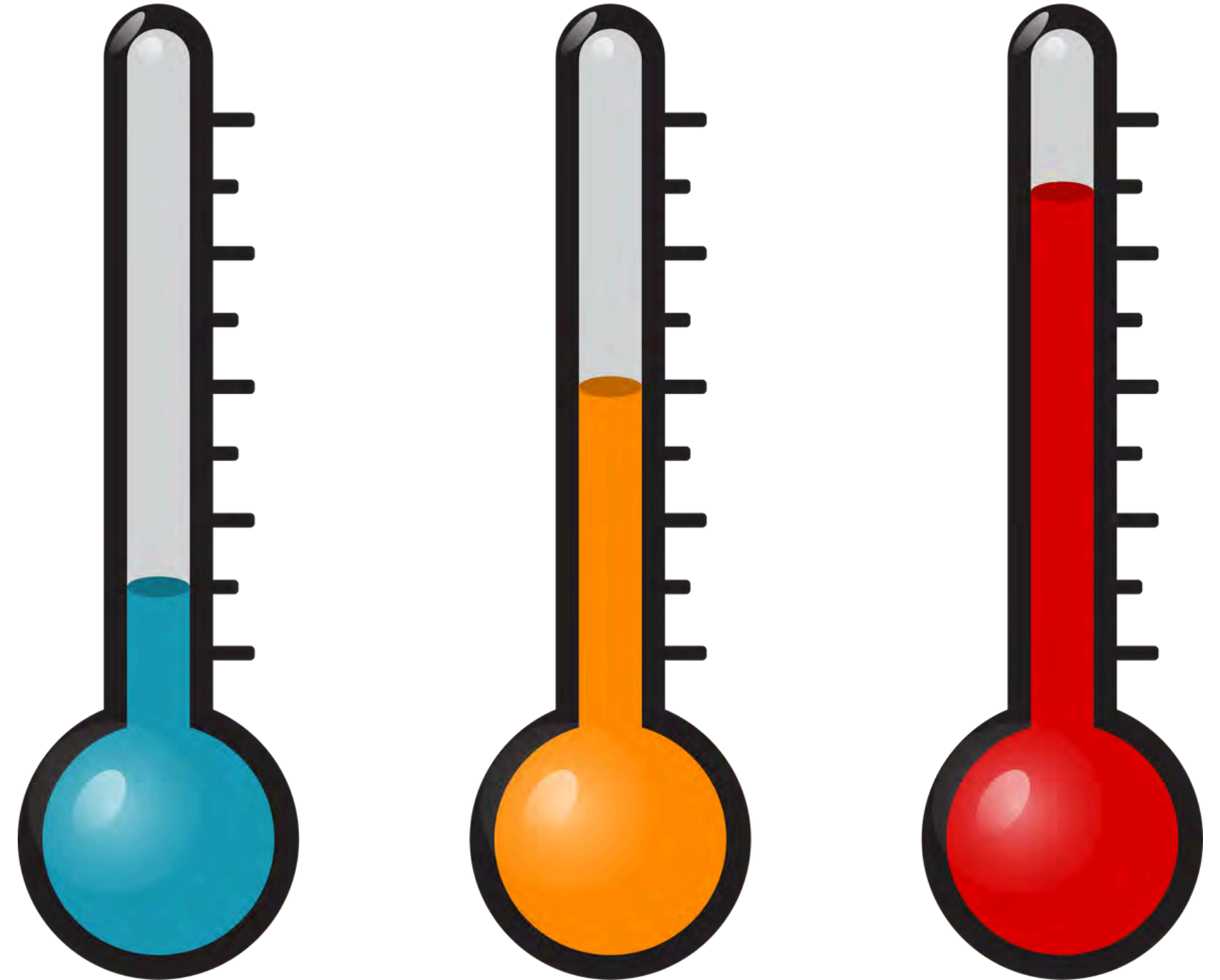
regulated



Self-Regulation

The process of managing emotions, behaviours, and body movements amidst information and stressors.

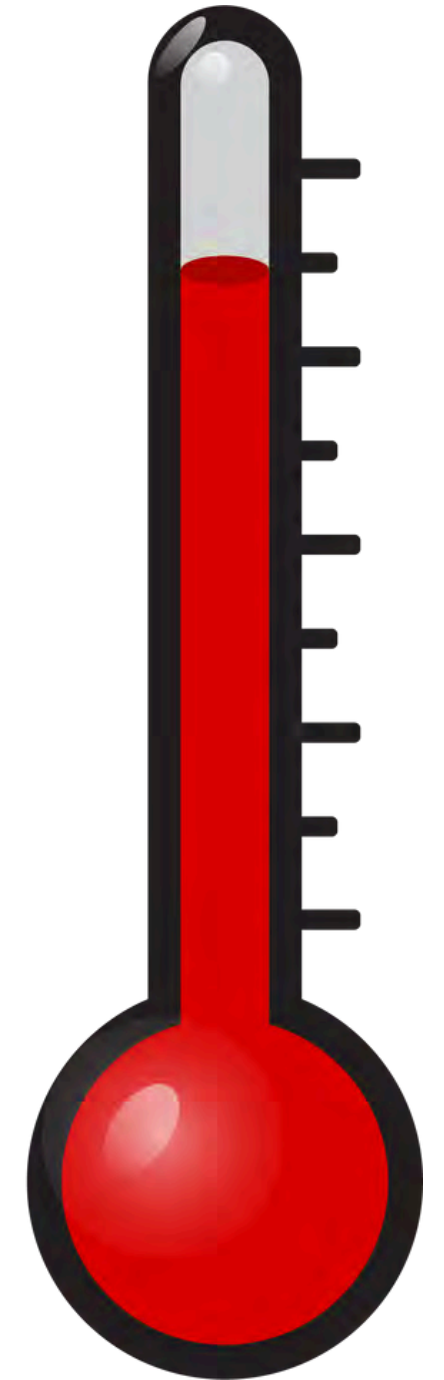
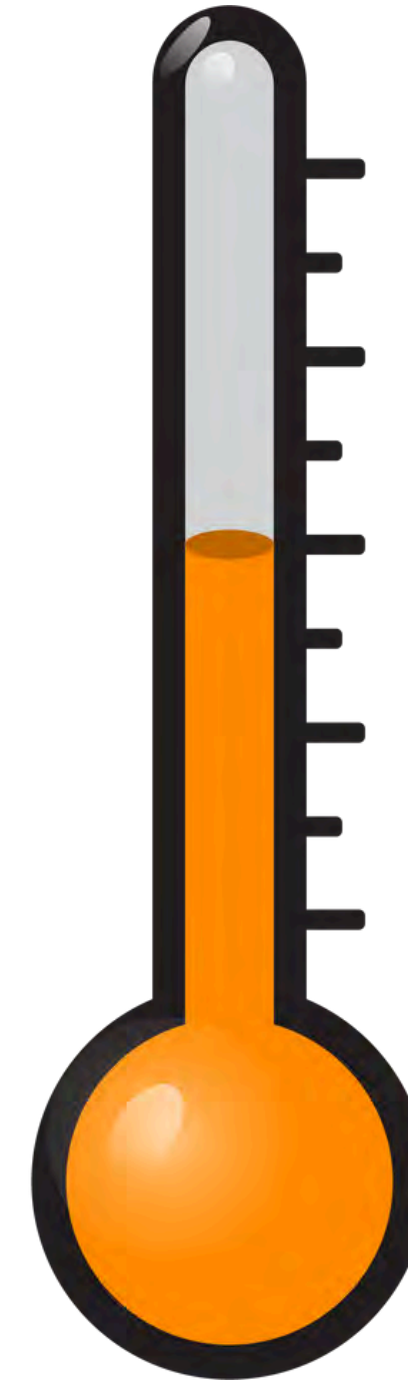
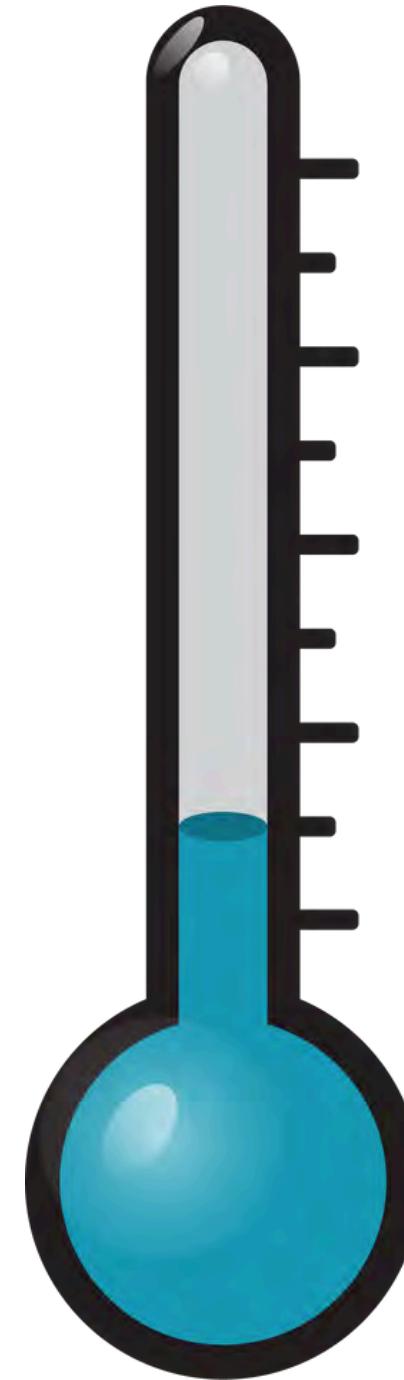
Self-regulation is a learned skill that develops with time and support.



Self-Regulation

- recognize changes in our environment
- identify feelings and (re)actions
- Compare to our baseline
- Take action to adjust (internally/externally)

self-regulation \neq **self-control**



Factors of Regulation

mental health
sensory processing
executive functioning



Factors of Regulation: Mental Health



Mental Health

The ability to feel, think, and act in ways that help us enjoy life and stay resilient through difficulties.

Everyone experiences different states of mental health at different points in their lives.

mental distress \neq mental health



Mental Health Continuum

	HEALTHY	REACTING	INJURED	ILL
MOOD	Normal mood fluctuations Calm & takes things in stride	Irritable/Impatient Nervous Sadness/Overwhelmed	Anger Anxiety Pervasively sad/Hopeless	Angry outbursts/Aggression Excessive anxiety/Panic Depressed/Suicidal thoughts
ATTITUDE & PERFORMANCE	Good sense of humour Performing well In control mentally	Displaced sarcasm Procrastination Forgetfulness	Negative attitude Poor performance/Workaholic Poor concentration Poor decision-making	Overt insubordination Can't perform duties, control behaviour or concentrate
SLEEP	Normal sleep patterns Few sleep difficulties	Trouble sleeping Intrusive thoughts Nightmares	Restless disturbed sleep Recurrent images Recurrent nightmares	Can't fall asleep or stay asleep Sleeping too much or too little
PHYSICAL HEALTH	Physically well Good energy level	Muscle tension Headaches Low energy	Increased aches and pains Increased fatigue	Physical illnesses Constant fatigue
SOCIAL WELL-BEING	Physically and socially active	Decreased activity Reduced socializing	Avoidance Withdrawal	Not going out or answering phone
SUBSTANCE USE & GAMING	No or low risk use of alcohol/cannabis/gambling/gaming	Alcohol/cannabis/gambling/gaming increasingly used to relieve tension/cope with stress	Difficulties limiting use of alcohol/cannabis/gambling/gaming	Unable to control use of alcohol/cannabis/gambling/gaming



Mental Health and Neurodivergence

Neurodivergence is not a mental health problem.

Neurodivergent individuals are more likely to experience mental health challenges.



Stigma

Stigma is a negative view of a person based on a characteristic, trait, or label.

Self-stigma is when someone believes they are inferior based on a characteristic, trait, or label.

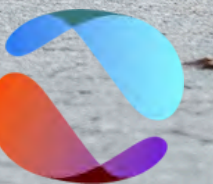
Stigma is a crucial factor why some people may not seek help.



Exclusion

More than half of Canadians with disabilities, including neurodivergence, experience some form of exclusion from schools and workplaces.

Exclusion can manifest in numerous ways, such as bias, condescension, discrimination, isolation, and marginalization.



Other Factors

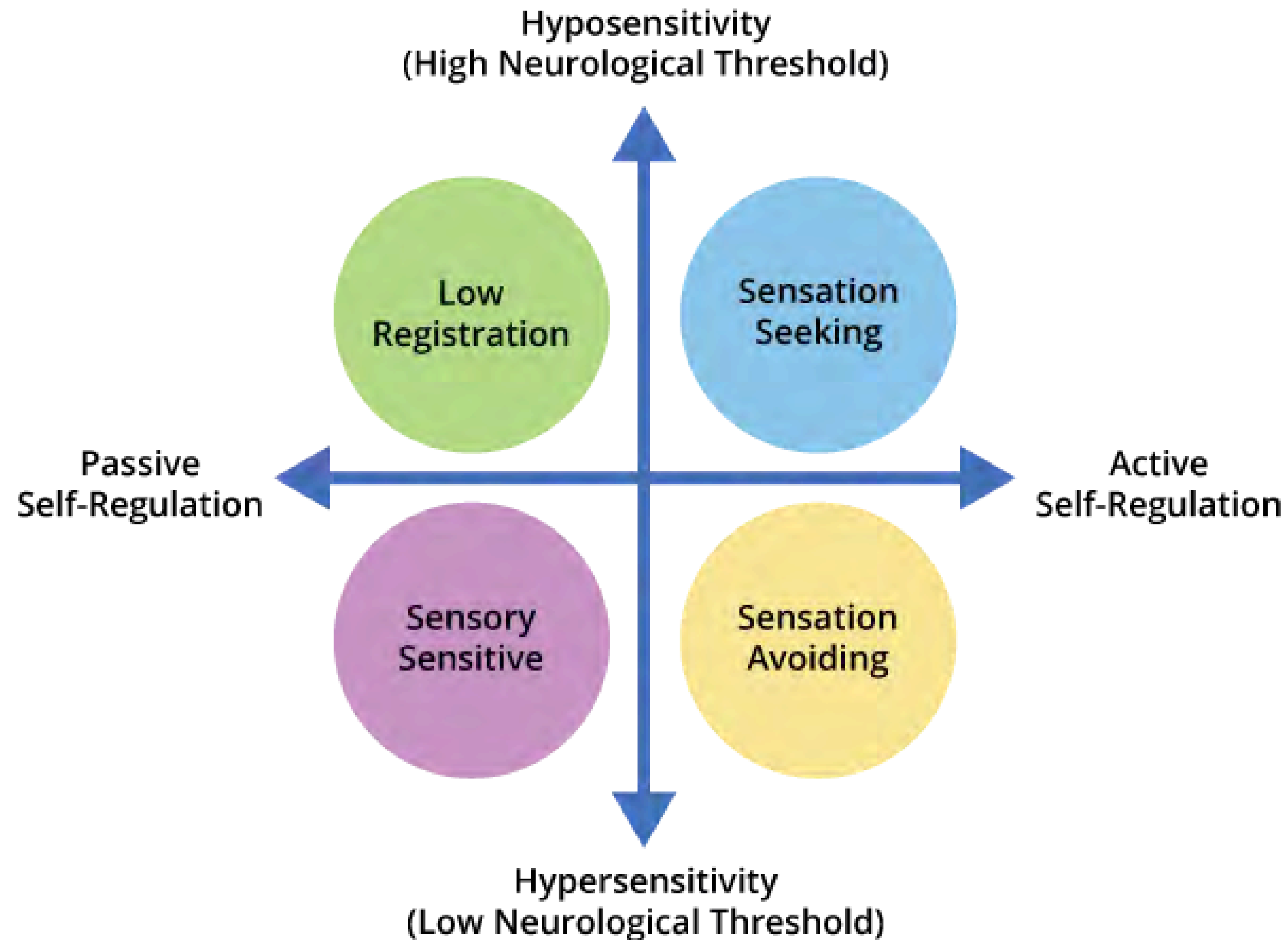
Masking
Environment
Social networks
Lateral aggression
Negative life events
Economic disadvantage
Advocacy
Transitions
Education settings
etc.



Factors of Regulation: Sensory Processing



Dunn's Model of Sensory Processing



Factors of Regulation: Executive Functioning





Executive Function

A set of cognitive processes that are necessary for the cognitive control of behaviour: selecting and successfully monitoring behaviours that facilitate the attainment of chosen goals.



Understanding your (or others)
“usual” or “baseline” is helpful
in recognizing when
dysregulation is occurring.

Regulation and Behaviour





'BAD' BEHAVIOUR ICEBERG



**All behaviour is a form of
communication.**

Redefining Behaviour

Expected behaviour: following the group plan, anticipated (re)actions, participates in nonpreferred activities



Be mindful of
neurotypical expectations

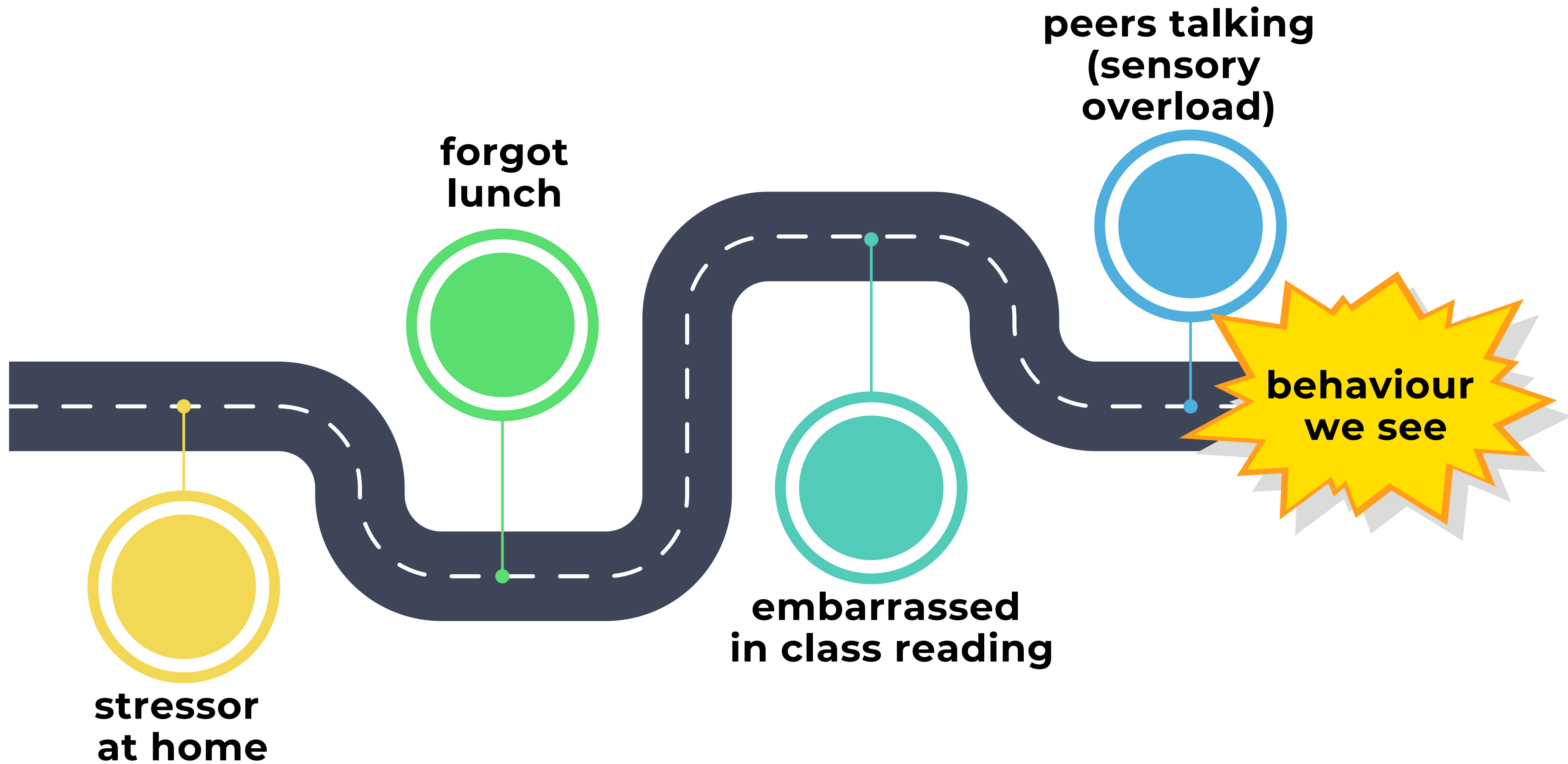


Redefining Behaviour

Unexpected behaviour: surprising to others, unanticipated, departs from the group plan, learning to participate in nonpreferred activities, engages at their own pace or in their own way

Unexpected behaviour is self-expression and self-advocacy





“Challenging” or unexpected behaviours happen as a result of unmet needs and/or communication break downs.

Redefining Behaviour

“Lying” = doesn’t feel safe to tell the truth or share about themselves, cognitive or communication differences, masking, mental health, social pressure

“Forgot” or “Lost” = executive functioning skills, stressful events, lack of support, mental health

“Refusing” = sensory overwhelm/avoidance, anxious, fearful, perceives ask or activity as threatening



Redefining Behaviour

“Talking back” = needs more information, communication differences, struggles with transitions, anxious

Yelling or hitting = feels unheard or unsupported, overwhelmed, fearful, mental health

“Distracting others” = executive functioning, seeking sensory input, feeling left out, exclusion, bullying



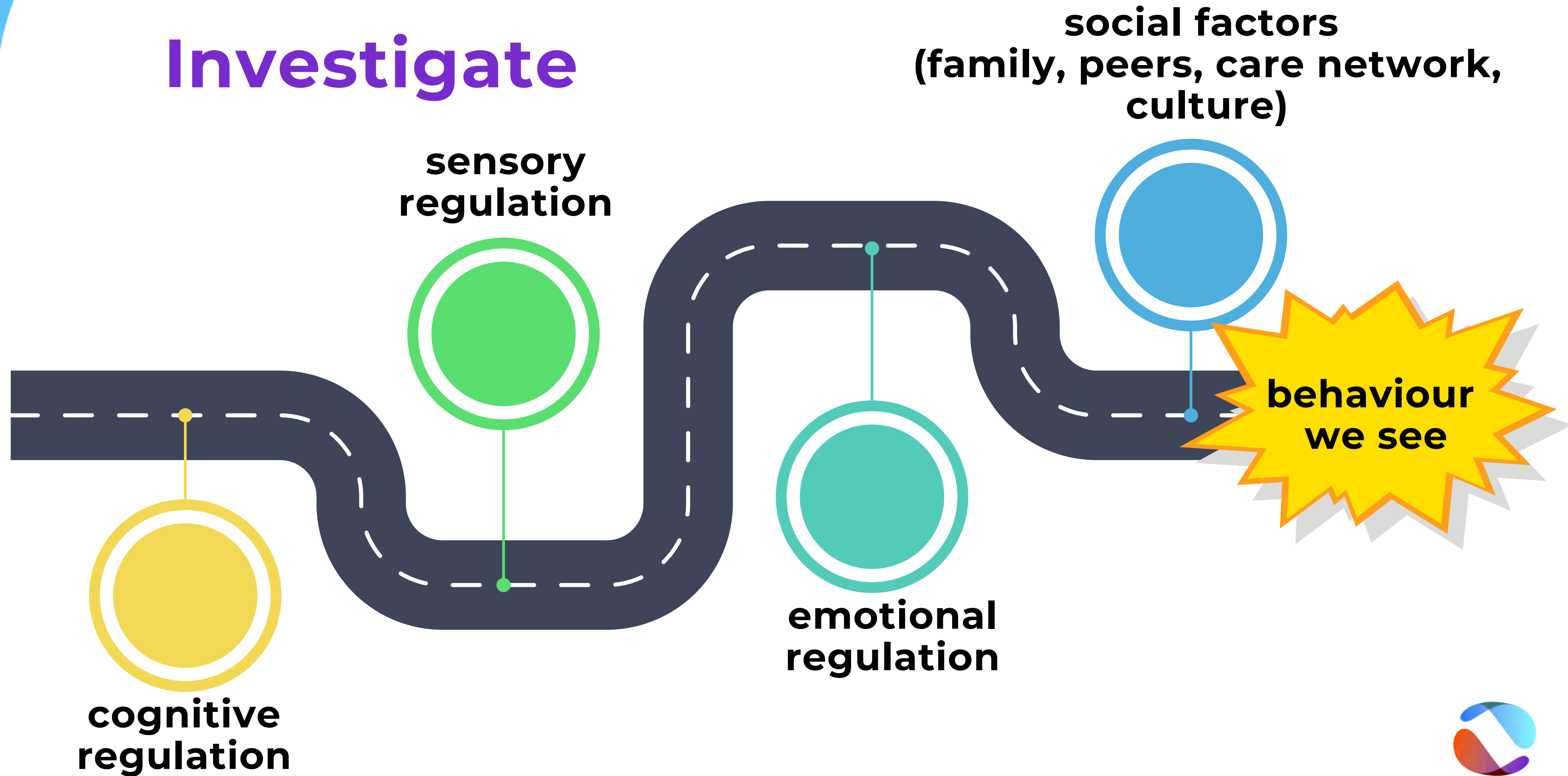
“Excuses” are valid reasons.

Strategies for Regulation



**Respond to the person,
not the behaviour.**

Investigate



Self-Regulation Strategies

- sensory tools or play
- take a break (calm space)
- movement like stimming, standing, walking, sitting on the floor
- keeping a comfort item or toy
- moving away or wearing a hood
- preferred activity like colouring or listening to music
- breathing/stretching strategies



Co-Regulation

The process of supporting each other's emotional and physical regulation



Co-Regulation

Create a calm base line for them to mirror

Validate, empathasize, and narrate their emotions

be present and stay near

Provide sensory supportand outlets



Co-Regulation

Listen to their explanations

Objectively narrate the events if needed

Leave the big chat or “lesson” for a later time



Co-Regulation Strategies

- stay present and keep a calm, neutral tone
- provide sensory tools or outlets
- model self-regulation strategies
- do a calming or energizing activity together
- take breaks as a group or in pairs
- provide structured choices
- go for a walk, consider outside
- partner with a buddy or peer who balances their strengths



Group Strategies

- be clear and flexible with your expectations
- create routines where possible
- plan for delays and have backup plans
- use visual supports
- provide open access to sensory tools/spaces
- teach about emotions and the senses
- model and practice strategies



Radical Acceptance:

- Avoid rewards, “natural consequences,” or punishment
- Never remove or exclude from the group
- Create multiple opportunities to learn and try new approaches
- Have conversations, not lessons, about unexpected behaviours or events
- Create plans together for if it comes up again



Radical Acceptance:

- Check in with yourself: “Am I seeking compliance, or am I creating connection?”
- Recognize if you are becoming dysregulated and try to self-regulate.
- Stop and revisit later if you cannot maintain a calm baseline
- Create a tap in/tap out system with teammembers to support eachother’s thresholds.
- Mistakes are human: apologize if you get dysregulated or raise your voice



Upcoming Huddle

Join us **January 28, 10-11:30am:**

- Work on case studies and consider how you might apply what you're learning.
- Bring scenarios from your context for group discussion and input from the LDS team.
- Bring ongoing questions to learn how to best support the kids and families you work with.

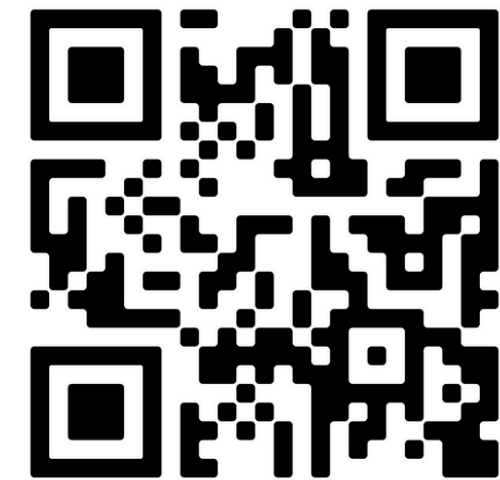
Go to: <https://ldsociety.ca/united-way-schools-out-program/> for links to join the huddle and a recording of today's workshop.



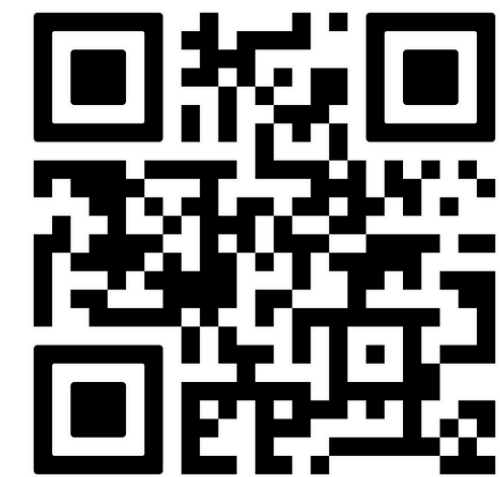
Programs and Assessments









RISE One-to-One Instruction is available online across Canada for learners with diagnosed or undiagnosed learning challenges.



Standardized Assessments - Executive Function Assessment



Information and Support

-  Professional development and parent/family workshops
-  One-to-one instruction (in person, at school and online)
-  Preschool and school-aged early intervention program
-  Formal assessment and identification of learning challenges
-  Assistive Technology services
-  Family Coaching



Questions?





Thank you!

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