



# *The Power of Regulation*

*Helping Children Navigate Anxiety*



PLACE of MIND

Inclusive Psychological Services

# Hello!

- ◆ Place of Mind- Clinical Consultation
  - Mental and Disability health
  - De-centralize mental health
  - Community-based
  - Affirmative
- ◆ Collective Reach on Wellness (CROW)
  - Education & Training
  - Healing
  - Nervous System Regulation support
  - Accessible & affirmative



PLACE of MIND

Diversifying and reclaiming  
health and healing by  
learning, living & loving.

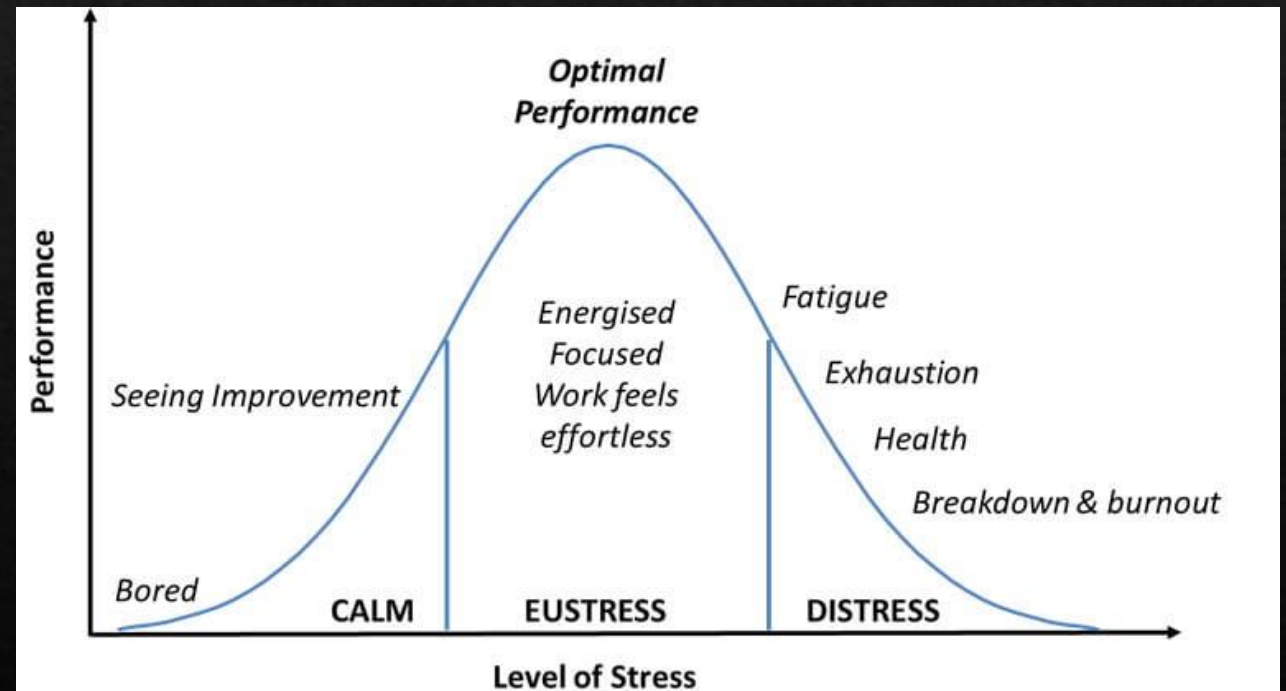
Resisting the status quo by caring for  
ourselves, others & the earth

Getting back in touch with individual &  
collective wisdom and embodiment

**Content that matters a communities that care**

# What Is Anxiety?

- ◇ A normal feature of being human
- ◇ Arousal/ performance: A protective feeling of getting ready for action
- ◇ Involves the body: Quick heart, braced muscles, adrenaline surge, churning stomach
- ◇ Fear & excitement





## *When Anxiety Becomes Stress*

- ◆ Alarm System
  - Danger sensors go deep and are impacted by many different things
- ◆ Predict & Protect
- ◆ Worry (What if?)
- ◆ Judgement (What you do vs Who you are)
- ◆ Camouflaging (Changing parts of self based on others)
- ◆ Exhaustion (pressures, loss in motivation)



# A Nervous System Response

**Perceived threat turns brain's alarm system on**



**Nervous system activates**



**Emotional brain automatically activates  
Thinking brain shuts down**

**★ Mind sends signals to body to escape threat**

**Increase in energy and stress hormones**



# Flip the Lid (Hand Model of the Brain)

Make a **Fist** with your thumb tucked inside your fingers. This is a model of your brain.

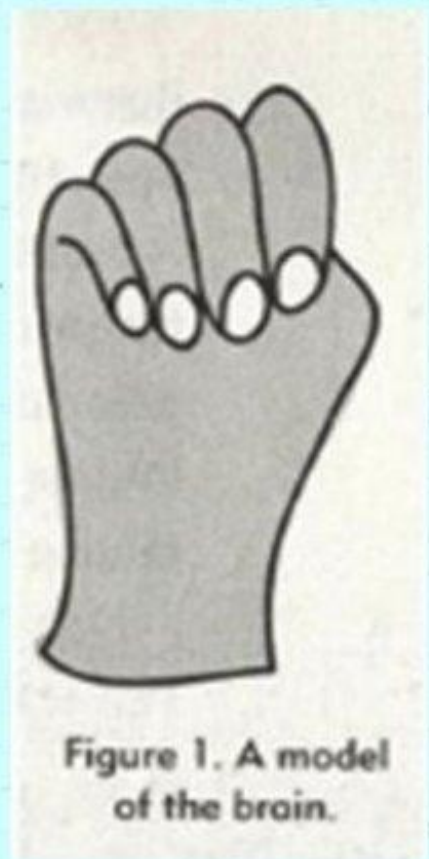
**Thumb** = Midbrain (Stem & Limbic) = Emotional Brain. This is where emotions and memories are processed. This is where the fight, flight & freeze is triggered.

**Fingers** = Cerebral Cortex = Rational Brain. Houses our ability to think and reason.

**Fingernails** = Prefrontal Cortex = Problem-Solving

When something triggers us, we are prone to “**Flip our Lid**” which means the Prefrontal Cortex (Fingernails) have a very poor connection with the Midbrain (Thumb), and we’re not able to access the logical, problem-solving part of our brain. Our emotions are overriding our ability to think clearly.

*-Dr. Dan Siegal*

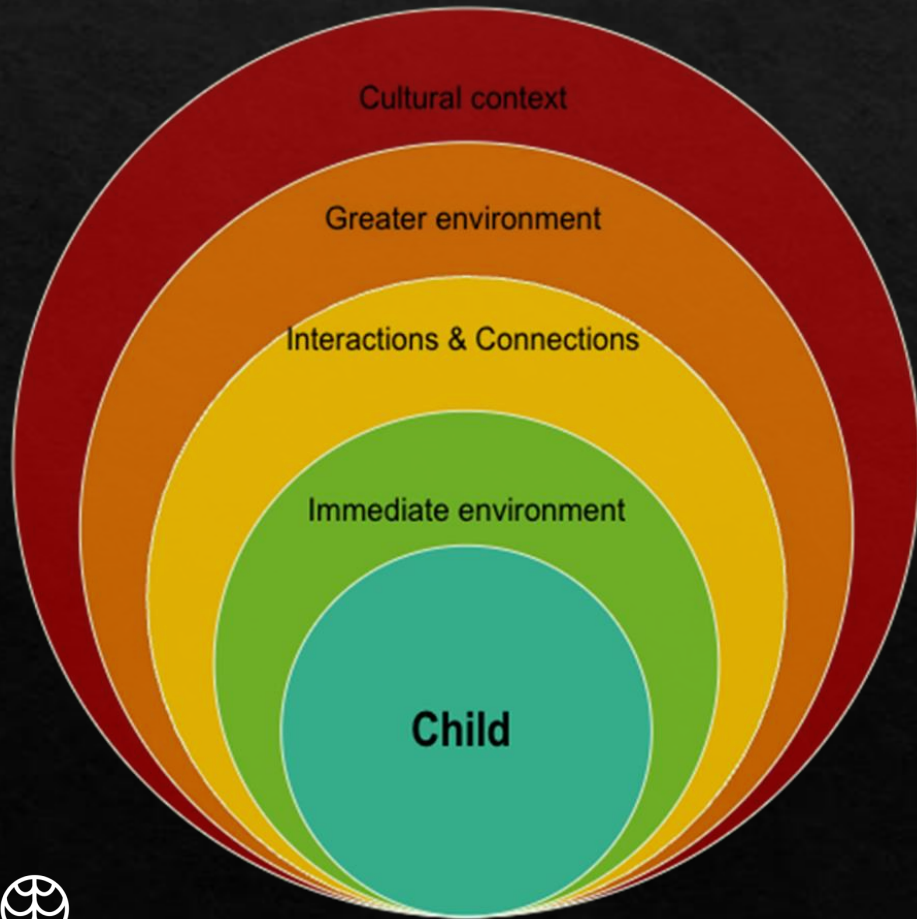


## *When Anxiety Might Be Leading...*

- ◇ Brain and Body- Changes in behavior
- ◇ Physical (headaches, stomachaches)
- ◇ Fatigue/ exhaustion
- ◇ Trouble sleeping
- ◇ Amped up/ More energy
- ◇ Outbursts & Irritability
- ◇ Hyper-aware
- ◇ Expressed worries, concerns, fears
- ◇ Not wanting to do things/ Avoidance

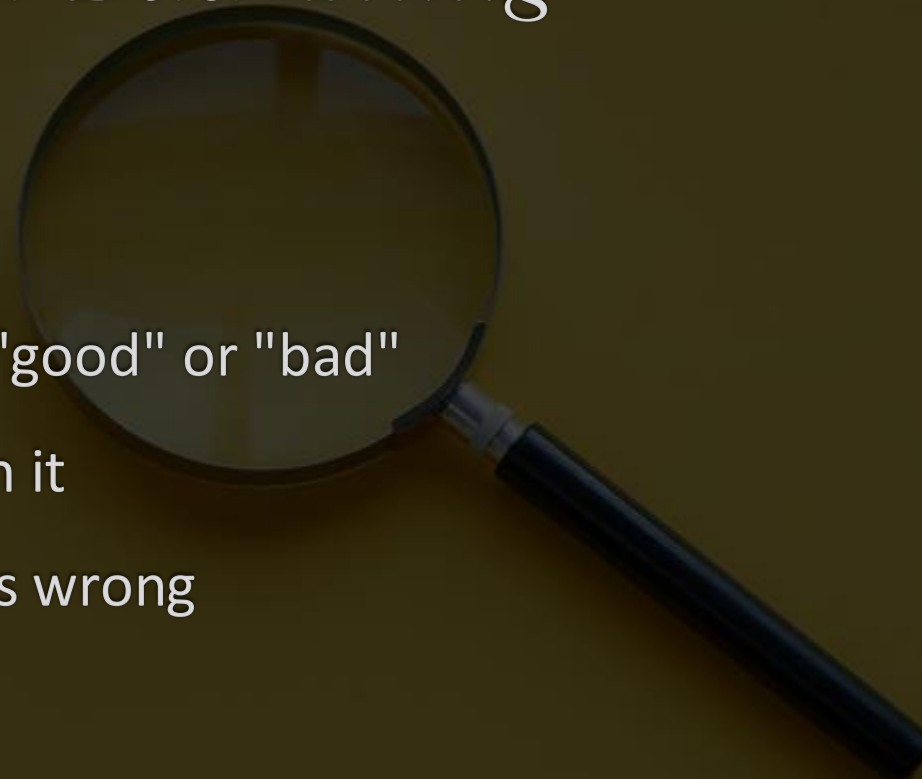


# What's Contributing?



# *It's Not a Bad Thing*

- ◆ Normalize
- ◆ Non-judgmental- No emotions are "good" or "bad"
- ◆ Cultivate a healthy relationship with it
- ◆ See it as data- Not that something is wrong
- ◆ Curiosity and care- Learn together





## *Kid Friendly Explanation*

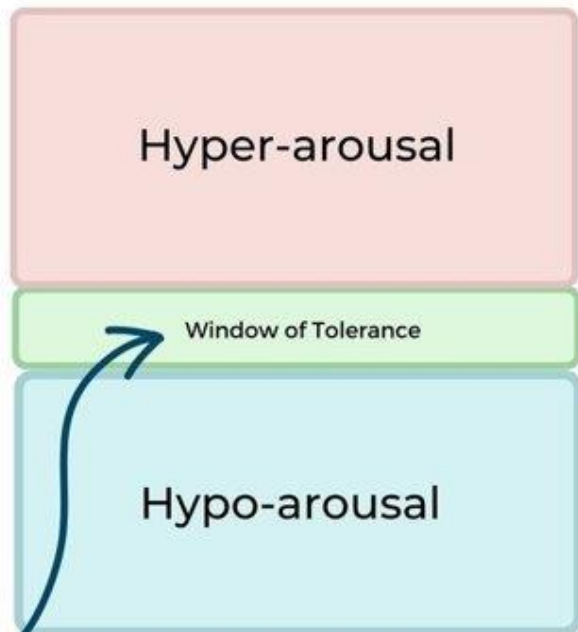
- ◆ Helpful/ Protective: "There is a part of our brain called the amygdala, which acts like a guard dog. It's her job to keep us safe, though at times she overreacts."
- ◆ Temporary: Anxiety is a feeling that passes like bubbles that pop, an ocean wave that drifts away, a cloud passing, a train going by
- ◆ Avoid labeling or placing judgement for: "big feelings"



# The Window of Tolerance

How Big Is Your Window?

When our window of tolerance is thin, our nervous system may look something like this



Thin margin for incoming stress!

# Regulation

Energy Needed  
(Match for the Activity)



My Energy  
(Where I Am)

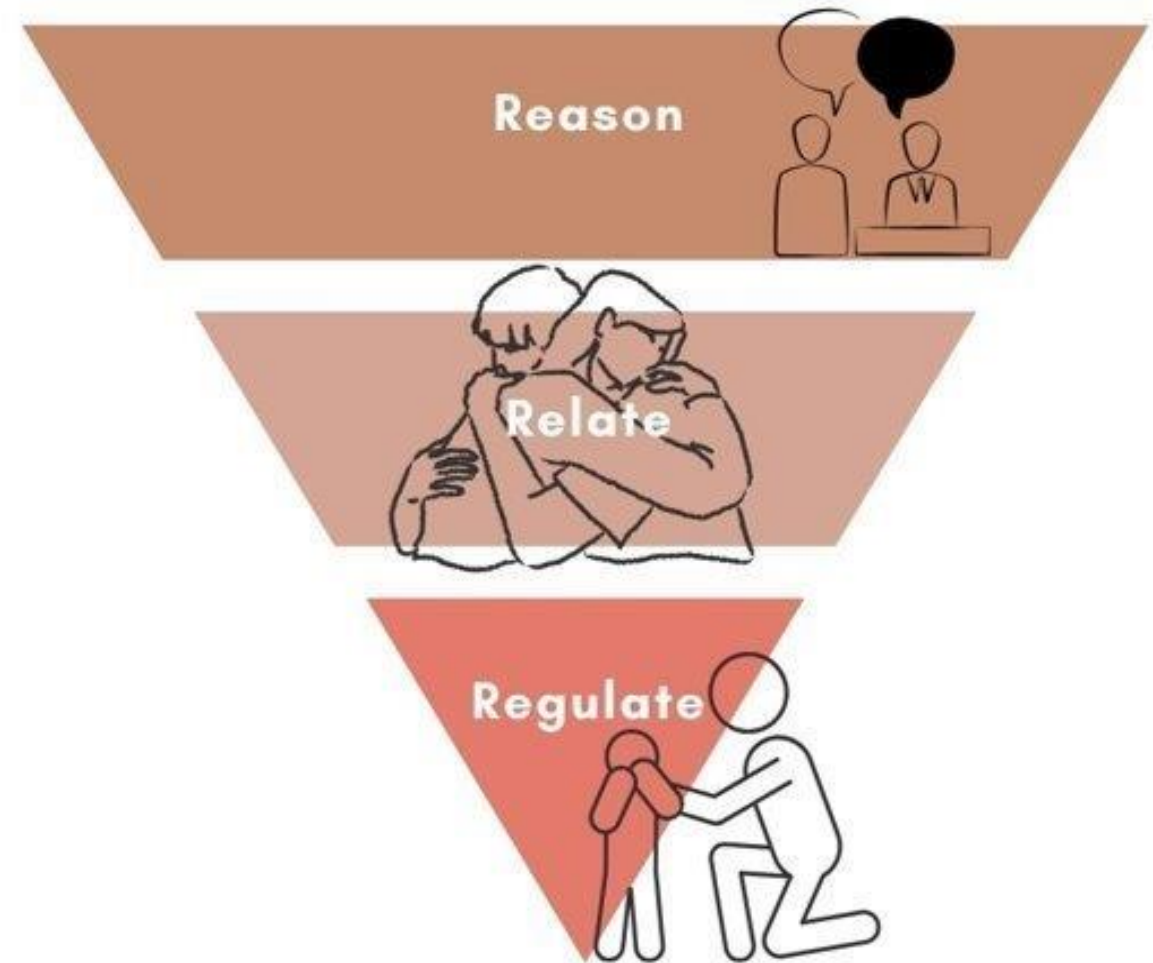
Maxed Out / Frenzied
Amped Up / Fidgety
Single Stream / Flowing
Settled / Calm
Sleepy / Still
Asleep

# Co-Regulation

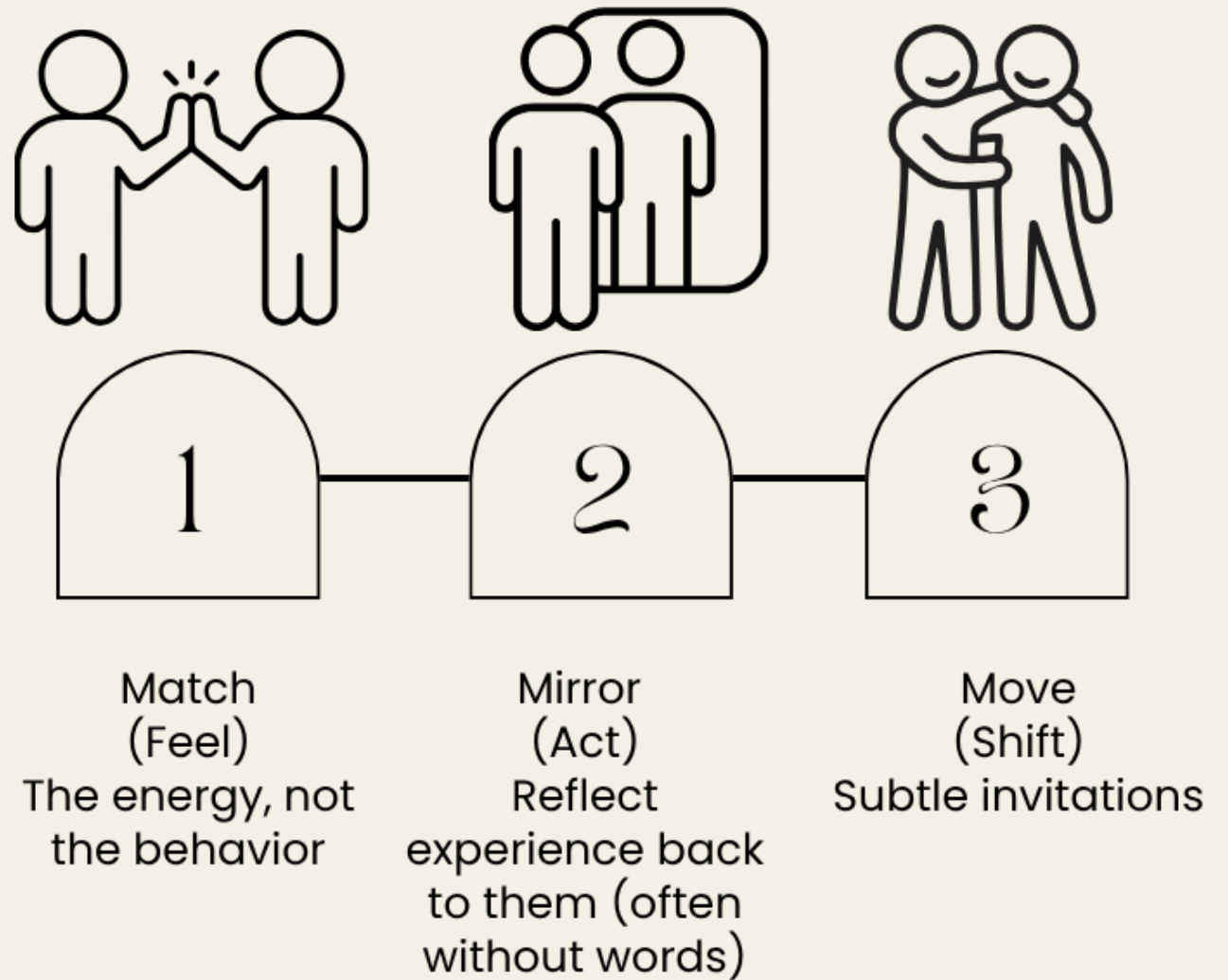
**'A dysregulated adult will never regulate a dysregulated child'**

DR BRUCE PERRY

Follow The Contented Child  



# Match, Mirror, Move



**Kim Barthel**

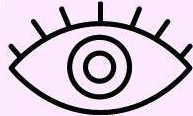


# Grounding


- ◇ Breath
- ◇ Cold
- ◇ Self-soothe
- ◇ Distract
- ◇ Play
- ◇ Creative outlets
- ◇ Singing, humming, chanting, gargling
- ◇ Massage, stretching
- ◇ Listen to music/ Watch something funny
- ◇ Hug (people & pets)

## 5 - 4 - 3 - 2 - 1 GROUNDING TECHNIQUE

A calming technique that connects you with the present by exploring the five senses.



**5** things you can see



**4** things you can touch



**3**  
things you can hear



**2**  
things you can smell



**1**  
thing you can taste



# Cyclic Breathing



Inhale slowly through your nose, expanding your lungs

1



Take a second, shorter inhale

2



Exhale slowly and completely through your mouth

3



Repeat process for 5 minutes

# Belly ("Diaphragmatic") Breathing



Sit comfortably with one hand on your chest and one on your stomach

1



Breathe in slowly through your nose, feeling your stomach expand

2



Breathe out slowly through pursed lips, feeling your stomach fall

3



Repeat for 5 minutes

## Move It to Lose It

- ◆ Physical activity to shift emotional state
- ◆ Proprioceptive input
- ◆ Outdoors, sunshine, nature



## *Name It to Tame It*

- ◇ Describe internal state without having to explain or rationalize
- ◇ Engages frontal lobes/ thinking brain
- ◇ Co-create- without too many words
- ◇ Transforms relationship with fear, worry, anxiety



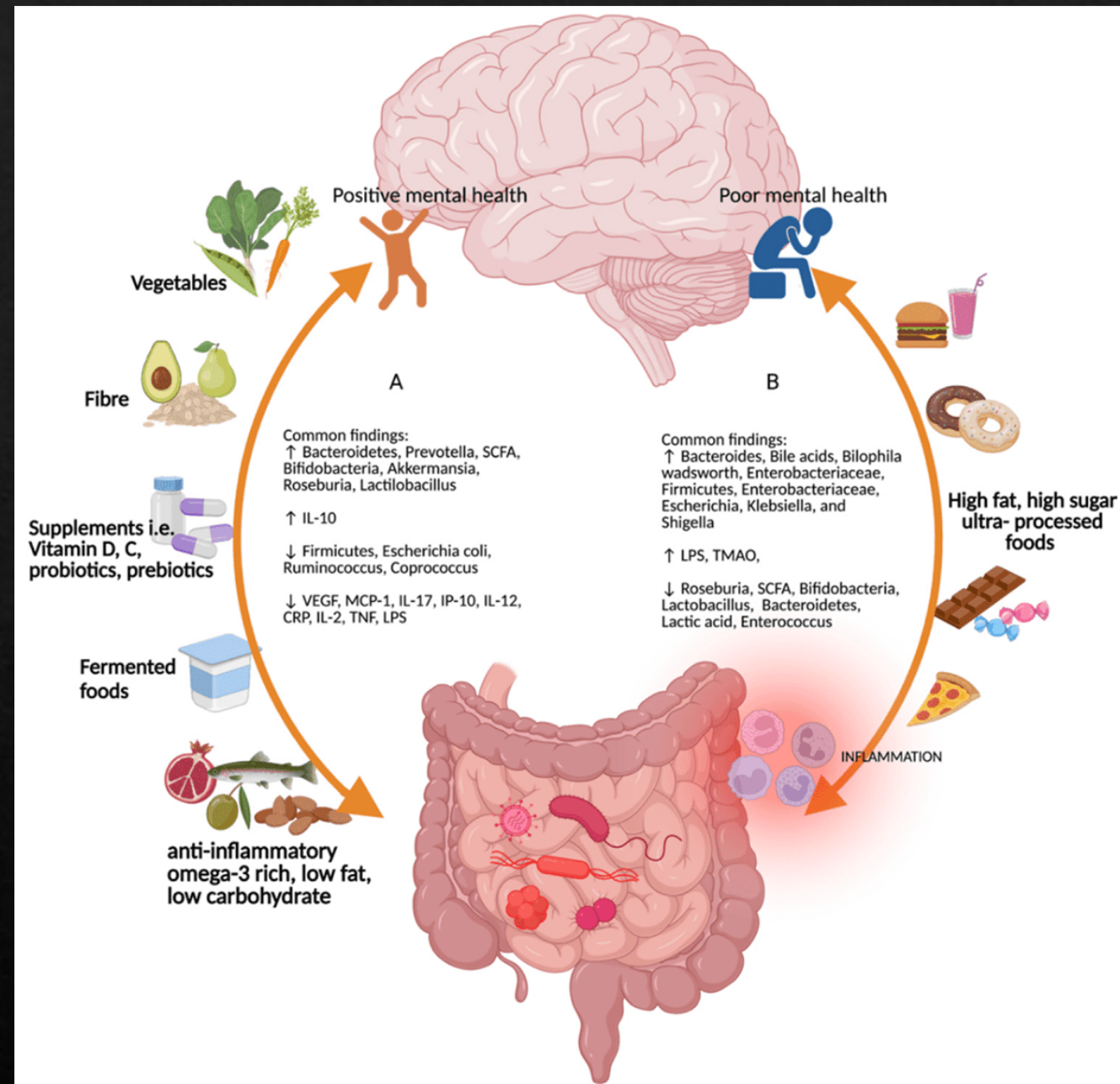
# *Back to The Basics:* *HALT*

- ◇ Hungry
- ◇ Angry
- ◇ Lonely
- ◇ Tired
  
- ◇ Basic human needs reduce sensitivity to things that make anxious
- ◇ Eat, de-stress, engage with others, rest



# Gut Regulation

- ◇ Gut has its own nervous system
- ◇ Bidirectional relationship- can be the cause and/ or product of anxiety
- ◇ Healthy microbiome





## Reminders for Our Children & Ourselves

"It's okay- it's good to let it out."

"I hear you- I'm here for you- I'll stay with you."

"It's okay to feel how you feel. It's not okay to \_\_\_\_\_."

"How you feel right now won't last forever. It's okay to feel how you are feeling. It will pass and you will feel better again soon."

"Let's take a breath, take a break, sit down, pause for a minute..."

"You are good and kind."

"I'll be over here when you need me.:"

"Let's have a Do-over!"

"What can we learn from this? What is the lesson in this?"



*Thank You!*

Dr. Angela Marx

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