

Recognising our stressors



In Dr Shanker's Self-Reg, the definition of stress is broader than our common understanding of stress. It's more than the demands of school and work, or finances. In Self-Reg, stress refers to anything that requires our body to burn energy in order to return to homeostasis - internal stability. (Hear him explain in 60secs [here](#)).

Defined this way, we start to see how an experience that isn't intended to be stressful could in fact be very stressful for a child, such as a trip to the amusement park. For the child, loud music and sounds, bright lights and colours, crowded places, waiting under the sun, the thrill of some rides, tiredness, could all be stressors that add to his stress load. When the stress load gets too heavy, it becomes much harder for him to manage additional stressors, however small, and his alarm gets kindled; his lid flips (Dan Siegel's 'flipping the lid': [here](#)). In other words, his behaviour is now stress behaviour.

You've experienced this. Your child is at the playground, seemingly having fun, and when you let her know it's time to leave, she dissolves into tears and maybe even screams of protest. If we are stress detectives, we might uncover some stressors:

- she's tired (it's evening and approaching dinner then bedtime)
- she's hungry
- while playing she had to really focus to figure out how to get up the climbing equipment
- she was worried about some children getting too near her
- there were lots of screams from other children
- another child wanted to ride her scooter
- the slide was a little wet and she didn't like the feeling of wearing wet pants

1. Becoming stress detectives allows us to get to know ourselves and our children on a whole other level. We might start uncovering hidden stressors that we never noticed in the past.

2. Every child is different; what is a stressor for one child might not be for another.

3. Stressors influence and magnify one another. For example, strong scents is a stressor for me that I can usually tolerate. But couple that with other stressors like hunger, tiredness and a crying baby, and I might find the strong scent intolerable, which in turn aggravates my hunger, tiredness and ability to manage a crying baby.

4. We're not trying to remove all stressors. In fact, some stress is beneficial when we are learning or working. The idea is to grow our stress awareness so that we can reduce unnecessary stressors in order to be in a calm, focused and attentive state when we are learning and working.

Looking at the 5 posters, do any stressors stand out to you? Do they help you think of hidden stressors that may have gone under the radar in the past?

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EXAMPLE STRESSORS

COGNITIVE DOMAIN

@kwiens62

COGNITIVE STRESS IS CAUSED BY DIFFICULTY PROCESSING CERTAIN KINDS OF INFORMATION.



BALANCE

A CHALLENGE THAT IS TOO EASY IS NOT A 'CHALLENGE'; BUT NEITHER IS SOMETHING THAT IS TOO HARD

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EXAMPLE STRESSORS

BIOLOGICAL DOMAIN

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STRESSORS CAN AFFECT OUR PHYSIOLOGICAL SYSTEM AND TAKE US OUT OF OPTIMAL FUNCTION. THIS CAN INCLUDE NOISES, CROWDS, TOO MUCH VISUAL STIMULATION, OR NOT ENOUGH EXERCISE.



BALANCE

HOMEOSTASIS - OTHERWISE KNOWN AS CALMNESS - OCCURS WHEN ENERGY EXPENDITURE AND RECOVERY ARE IN SYNC

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EXAMPLE STRESSORS

EMOTION DOMAIN

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STRESSORS IN THIS DOMAIN INCLUDE STRONG EMOTIONS, BOTH POSITIVE (OVEREXCITED) AND NEGATIVE (ANXIETY, ANGER) AND OFTEN INTERACT WITH AND MULTIPLY STRESSORS IN OTHER DOMAINS.



BALANCE

BALANCE IS ATTAINED, NOT BY TRYING TO CURTAIL STRONG EMOTIONS, POSITIVE AS WELL AS NEGATIVE, BUT RECOGNIZING THEM AS SUCH

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EXAMPLE STRESSORS

PROSOCIAL DOMAIN

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SIGNS OF PROSOCIAL STRESS SUCH AS DIFFICULTIES SHARING, TELLING THE TRUTH, OR UNDERSTANDING RIGHT AND WRONG ARE OFTEN TIED TO A CHILD'S DIFFICULTY COPING WITH OTHER PEOPLE'S STRESS.



BALANCE

WHEN THE INDIVIDUAL PUTS THE GROUP AHEAD OF SELF, YET REMAINS AN INDIVIDUAL

kristin.wiens MORE INFORMATION VISIT: WWW.SELF-REG.CA

EXAMPLE STRESSORS

SOCIAL DOMAIN

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SOCIAL STRESSORS RELATE TO A CHILD'S DIFFICULTY PICKING UP ON SOCIAL CUES, AND UNDERSTANDING THE EFFECT OF THEIR OWN BEHAVIOUR ON OTHERS.



BALANCE

BE NEITHER TOO ACQUIESCENT NOR TOO OVERBEARING, NEITHER TOO SOLITARY NOR TOO GREGARIOUS

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