



A Wellness Series from Kids In Crisis



Helping Kids with Anxiety
a discussion with Dr. Christopher Bogart, PhD



Do you know a child or teen who needs help? Not sure? Speak to our trained counselors today. Our free and confidential services are available to help children, newborn to 17. Please call – we can help.

CALL OUR HELPLINE 203-661-1911

kidsincrisis.org One Salem Street Cos Cob, CT 06807



COPING WITH TWIN EPIDEMICS

Social-Emotional Well Being In Tweens and Teens

Dr. Chris Bogart, *Executive Director, Sasco River Center*

Tuesday, May 18, 2021 with Kids in Crisis

Anxiety and Wellness

- *“My stress stresses me out to the point where I’m too stressed to deal with stress.”*

Instagram Post

- *The greatest weapon against stress is our ability to choose one thought over another.*

William James

- *“Anxiety is the handmaiden of creativity.”*

T.S. Eliot

Agenda

- > What is stress and anxiety?
- > A few sobering statistics
- > Why is this particularly relevant now?
- > A Developmental Perspective
- > The brain and adaptability
- > Fostering emotional adaptability through parent self care
- > Tips for developing emotional adaptability in children
- > Some Resources
- > Conclusions



Some Definitions

➤ **Eustress**

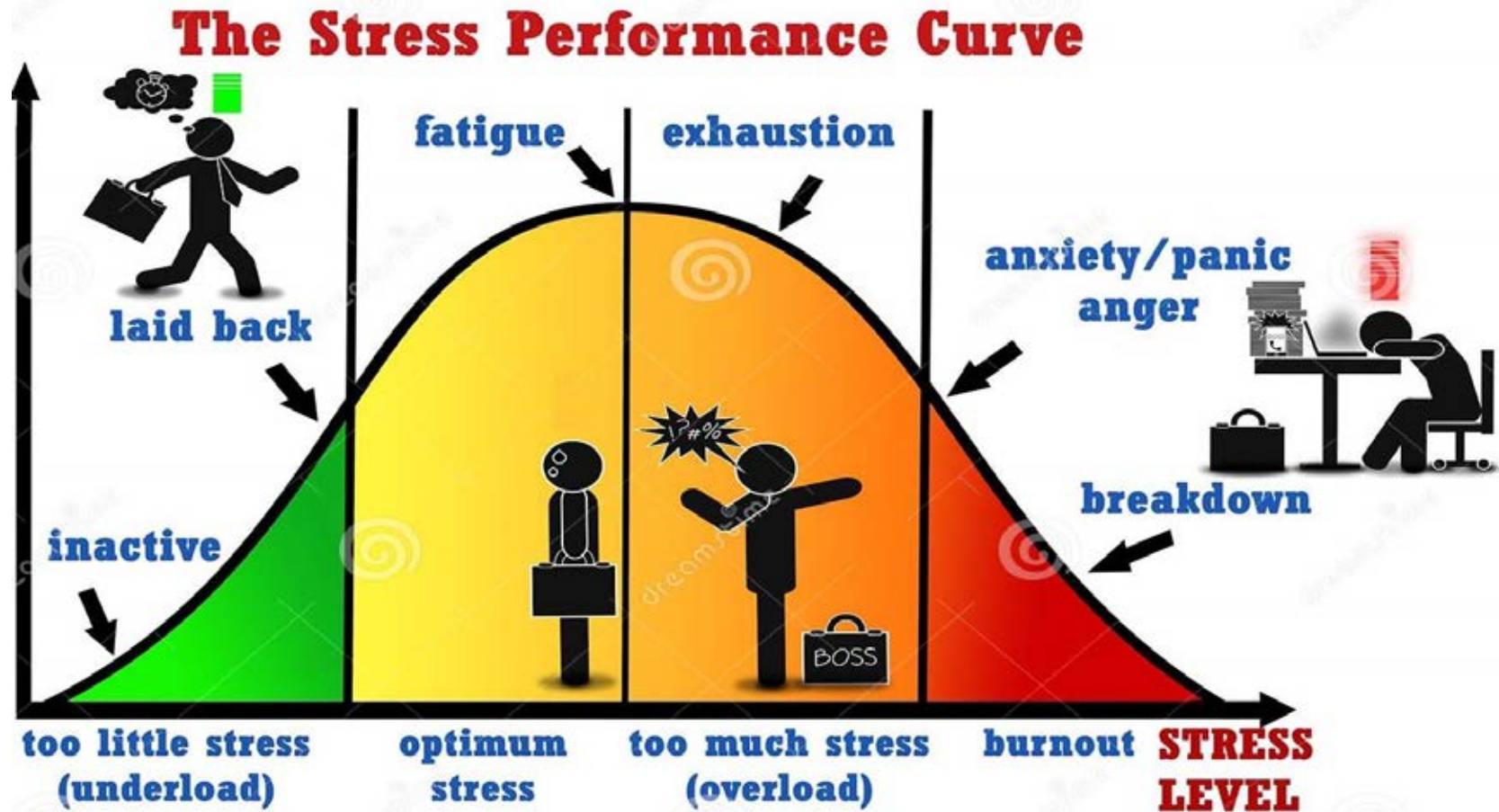
➤ **Distress**

➤ **Anxiety**

➤ **The body's
alarm system**



Yerkes-Dodson Law



Statistics on the Anxiety Epidemic

Several recent studies have documented a marked increase in reported cases of anxiety in children and teens:

- Nearly one in three 13 – 18-year-olds meet criteria for an anxiety disorder (Centers for Disease Control, 2017).
- 30% of Wilton High School students report “above average” levels of anxiety and depression (Dr. Suniya Luthar, 2017)
- Direct link found between childhood stress and risk for adult depression (Univ. of New Hampshire, 2003)
- 36% of 12-17-year-olds reported high levels of anxiety during pandemic (Zhou et al., 2020)

What is Going On?

There are obvious factors (loss of connection, inconsistent schooling, societal stress) that have exacerbated stress ... but this has been increasing long before the pandemic. Why?

- Technological Changes
- The Hygiene Hypothesis and the Psychological Immune System
 - “Smooth seas do not make skillful sailors.”
- The Biological Model
- The Developmental Model

Early Childhood
autonomy vs. shame and doubt

Preschool
initiative vs. guilt

School Age
industry vs. inferiority

Adolescence
identity vs. role confusion

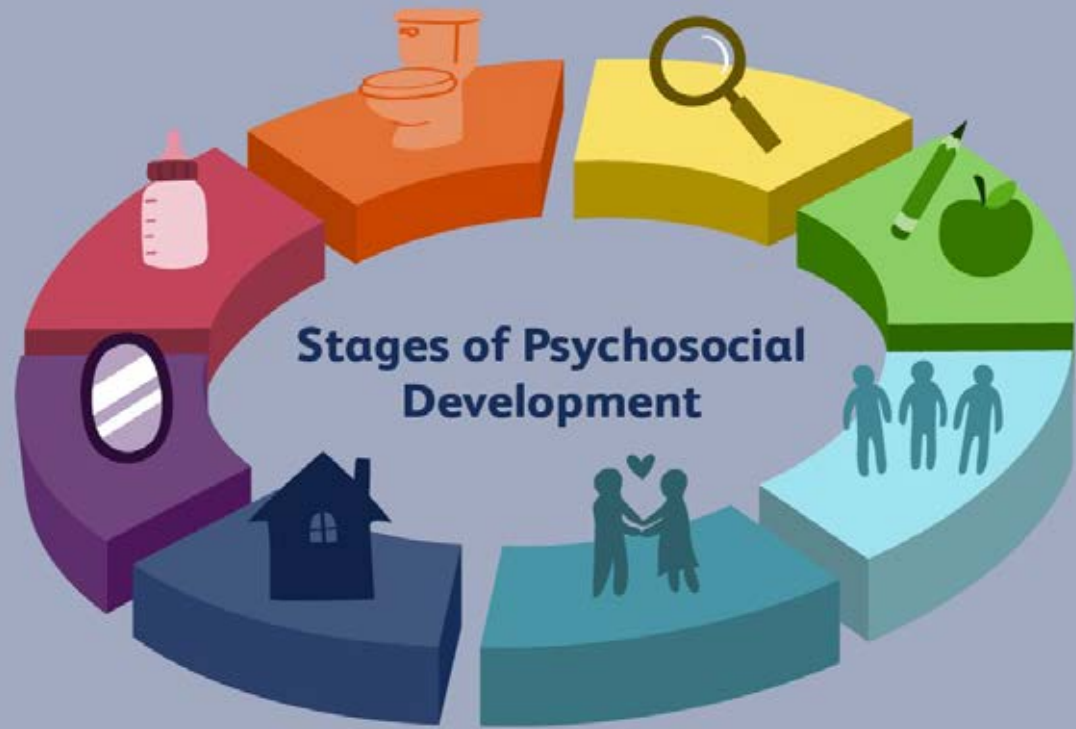
Young Adulthood
intimacy vs. isolation

Middle Adulthood
generativity vs. stagnation

Maturity
ego integrity vs. despair

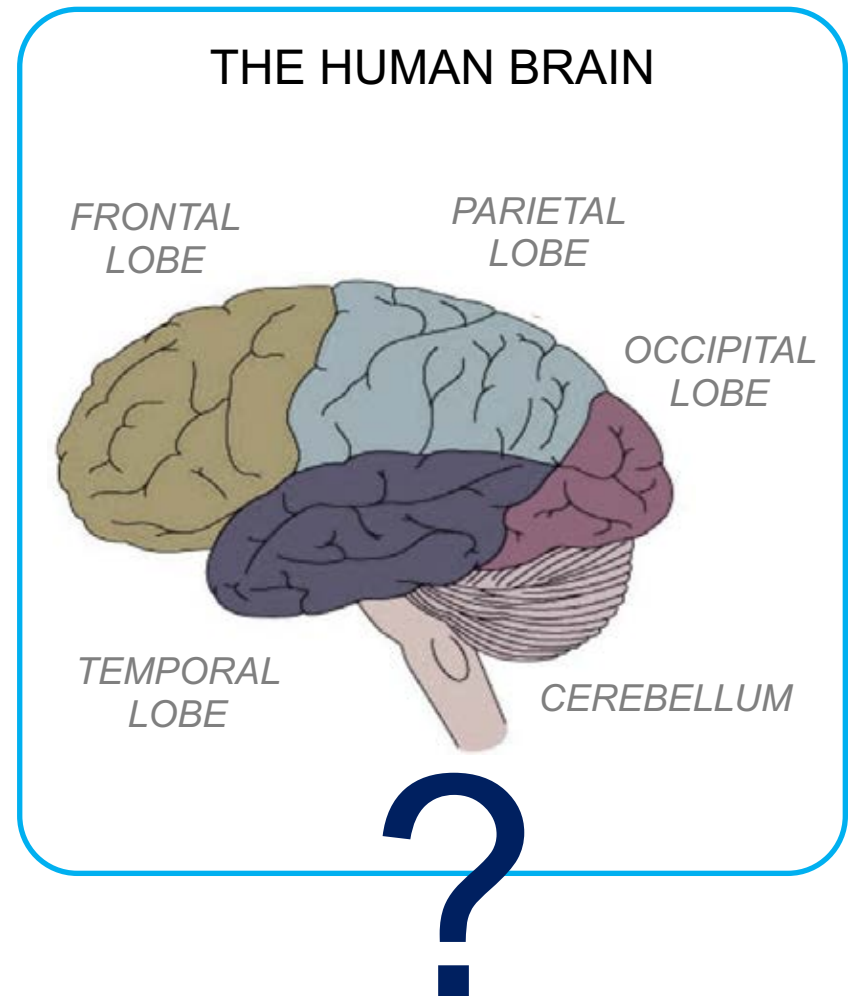
Infancy
trust vs. mistrust

Stages of Psychosocial Development



The Human Brain & the Unknown

- > The human brain hates the unknown
- > The human brain hates to be reminded of our lack of control
- > Unknown + lack of control = triggered emotional centers
- > Triggered emotional centers = rigidity and reduction in logic
- > Thus, we need to maximize predictability
- > And we need to stay in the present to focus upon what we can control



Adaptability is:

The human capacity to face, adjust to and ultimately learn from life's experiences and challenges.

FLEXIBILITY

RESILIENCE

SELF CONTROL

It is not the strongest of the species that survives, nor the most intelligent. It is the one that is most adaptable to change.

Charles Darwin
naturalist, geologist and biologist

Modeling Adaptability Through Self-Care

- > Acknowledge the bumps in the road
- > “First, put on your own oxygen mask...”
- > Focus on what you can control
- > “Stay Present” – Mindfulness!
- > Take time to relax
 - + Take some “ME” time
 - + Regular sleep, exercise, diet
 - + Pick your “turn off” time
- > Socialize (safely)
- > Turn to others for help



10 Ways to Support Emotional Adaptability

1. The importance of play

- Play = Time without purpose
- Support as much social connection as possible

2. Routines + Predictability = CONTROL

3. Validate the “losses” – lead with empathy

- NY Times: 05/04/21 – Teenagers & Mental Health

4. Clear rules and expectations

5. Humor as #1 antidote to stress

“Laughter is the best medicine”

Proverbs, King James Bible

10 Ways to Support Emotional Adaptability

6. Stay present – encourage mindfulness
7. Expect dysregulation and regression
 - Connect before correct
 - Go “Low and Slow” – co-regulation
8. The importance of sleep
9. Put stressors into perspective
10. Promote awareness of feelings
 - > “Name it to tame it” – RULER (Marc Brackett)

When to Seek Help

- Appetite or sleep problems
- Frequent physical complaints
- Prolonged depressed affect/hopelessness
- Nightmares
- Apathy
- Threats of harm to self or others
- Body image distortion
- Running away
- Strange thoughts or unusual behaviors

Some Resources

BOOKS

- “Raising Resilient Children” *by Robert Brooks and Sam Goldstein*
- “Permission to Feel” *by Marc Brackett*
- “Rising Strong” *by Brene Brown*
- “Building Resilience” *by Kenneth Ginsburg*

APPS

- Headspace; Stop, Breath, Think; Smiling Mind

WEBSITES

- <https://positivepsychology.com/resilience-activities-worksheets/>
- <https://www.edutopia.org/resilience-grit-resources>



Some Conclusions

Change = Stress

Stress is inevitable

Stress is not a bad thing

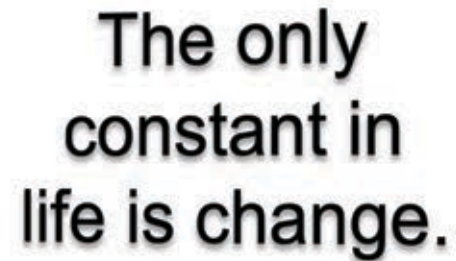
> Stress management = resilience

Stay in the present

Focus on what you can control

Model calm

Self care and self compassion are the keys!



The only
constant in
life is change.

Heraclitus of Ephesus
Ancient Greek philosopher

Sasco River Center: Who We Are



Sasco River Center is a collaborative and multidisciplinary center
for evaluation & treatment of developmental concerns
Merger of Sensory Kids & The Southfield Center for Development
Locations in Darien, Stamford & Wilton

Questions and Answers

