

November 18, 2025

A presentation on

Emotions & Teens: Parenting Through Difficult Moments

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A bit about me ...



What we'll cover (slides will be sent out)

Understanding
mental health &
the role of
emotions

Review 3 types of
difficult moments

Metaphor for the
tension between
parents & teens

When we mess
up

Where to go for
help

Mental Health

SPEAK
UP

"Mental health is the capacity of each and all of us to feel, think and act in ways that enhance our ability to enjoy life and deal with the challenges we face."

WE ALL HAVE MENTAL HEALTH



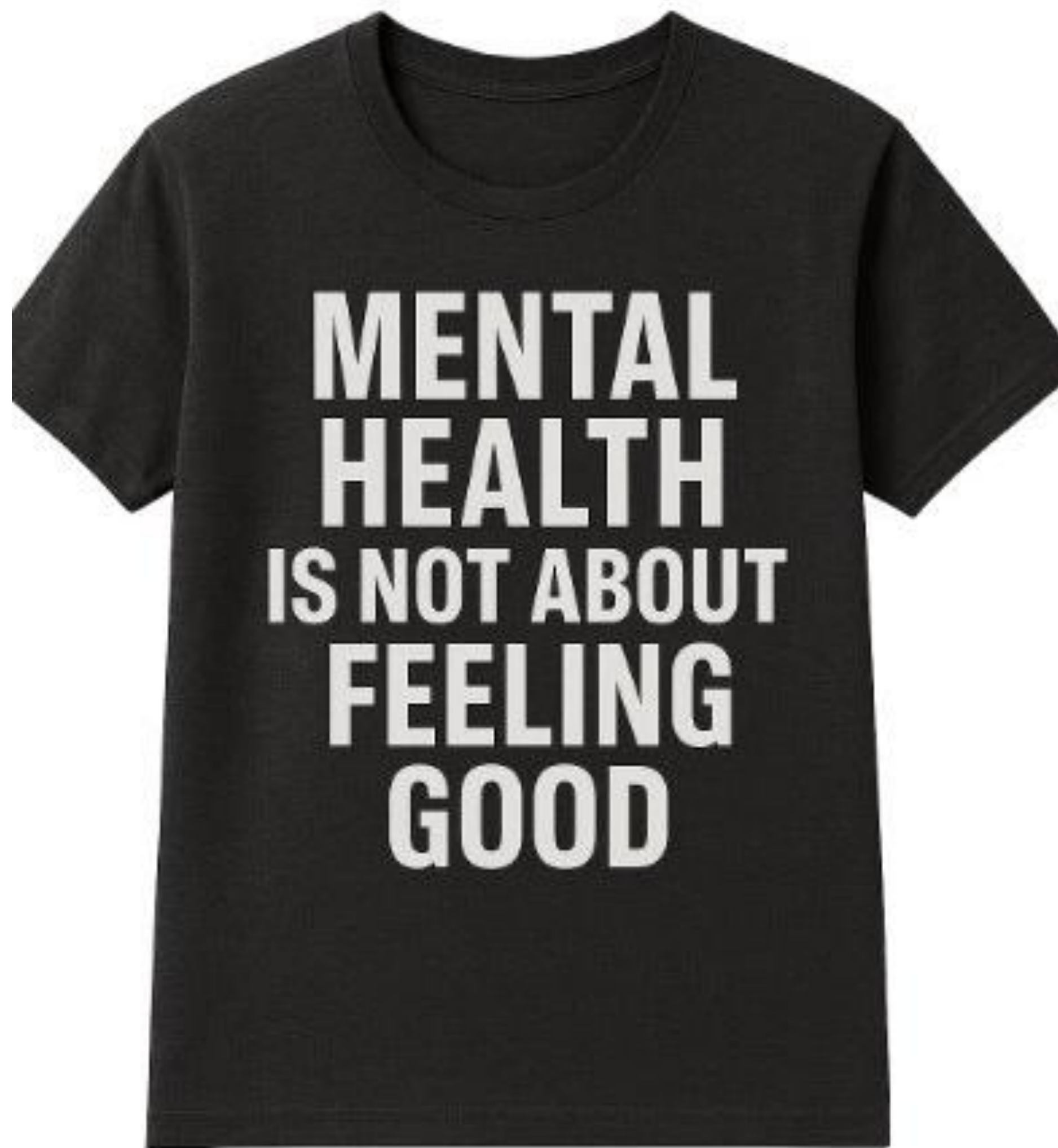
MENTAL HEALTH CONTINUUM MODEL



What are emotions ... and why?!?!



Emotions are messengers that help us navigate our lives.
~ Dr. Lisa Damour "Emotional Lives of Teens"



**MENTAL
HEALTH
IS NOT ABOUT
FEELING
GOOD**

*Jim Gaffigan, Comedian
on parenting teens*

<https://www.youtube.com/shorts/Y52JfDcyT9g>



*Is this the hard
part??*

*Emotional
intensity
peaks around
13 or 14*

*Dr. Dan Siegel
Talks about hormones*



<https://youtu.be/HkKBWp1kuSA>, 22 seconds



<https://youtu.be/dISmdb5zfiQ> Brain Development in Teenagers (2 minutes)



With that in "mind" ... Difficult Moments



Annoyed

Apparently you can't do anything right. You chew too loud, you swallow while you drive, you have no fashion sense and you're bad at this parenting thing.



Meltdown

Your teen is lying on the floor sobbing. They are overwhelmed by their responsibilities.



"No!"

Your older teen will not go to bed when you ask them to. They are starting to nap in the evenings. You are worried they will be unable to keep up with school.

Your teenager hates how you chew

Sorry to be the first one to tell you this ...



Separation-
Individuation

Independence

Egocentric

Maybe they are
right?



The teenage meltdown

Understand your teen's emotional pain without being afraid of it

- Your teen learns they do not need to fear their big feelings
- "It makes sense to me that you are feeling this way"

"Teenagers who are afraid of unpleasant feelings tend to confine themselves to narrowly constrained paths"
(Damour, 2023, p. 171)

Talking about feelings actually works!

Help your teen get specific when naming their emotion

Provide a listening and steady presence

- Ask before starting a problem-solving conversation



The teenage meltdown (cont'd)



Rein it in when your teen's emotions are getting in the way of what they want or need to do.

Taking a break from intense feelings can help put them in perspective (and relax!)

How?

- Distraction
- "Change the channel" for their thoughts
- Designate a "worry time"
- Pay attention to sleep
- Accept quirky non-verbal emotional outlets

The teenage meltdown (cont'd)



Your teen may not be falling apart. Overall emotional health includes:

- 1) Feelings that "make sense" in light of the circumstances
- 2) Coping strategies that are helpful, not harmful
- 3) Using a variety of defenses to protect against the full impact of the emotion, such as humour or **externalization**
 - Denial is not a healthy defense mechanism

"Externalizing" - Good to know!

"Unloading painful feelings onto their parents is one of the many ways that teens manage their intense emotions."

(Damour, 2023, p. 26)

Responding to "No!"



Understanding the "NO!"

"Oppositionality cannot arise on its own." (Mate, 2024, p. 185)

1) Your teen's "counterwill" may be triggered:

- Counterwill is a reflex from an underdeveloped sense of self
- Natural response to fear of being controlled
- They may actually want to do what you asked them to do!

2) Your teen may not be able to handle another perceived 'demand'. They are dysregulated / unable to think straight:

- Reflect back to them what they are saying (as they said it in terms of words and intensity)
- Validate the emotion behind the words
- Coach your teen on how to respectfully express the emotion
- Help your teen articulate what they see as getting in the way of doing what was asked of them

If the conversation escalates:

- Name the issue that's interfering in the conversation
 - o "It's hard to talk about this right now" or "I can tell that I'm not handling this conversation very well"
- Initiate a pause with a commitment to return

Responding to "No!"



Parenting Style	Jellyfish (Permissive Parents)	Dolphin (Authoritative Parenting)	Tiger (Authoritarian)
<i>Drive in childhood</i>	Drive dominated by child's demands.	Parent-guided drive of nurturing the child's nature.	Parent-driven pushing and/or hovering.
<i>Autonomy</i>	Too much autonomy too early.	Gradual increasing of autonomy with age.	Expectation of autonomy but it is unintentionally impeded by pushing and hovering.
<i>Role-modeling</i>	Non-purposeful	Purposeful use of role modeling for collaboration, balanced lifestyle, and core character values.	Non-purposeful or dominated by a narrow definition of success (financial or status oriented).
<i>Instruction</i>	Not enough or absent	Instruction when needed but focus is guidance including learning from trial and error.	Too much adult instruction leading to lack of opportunity for independent problem-solving.
<i>Discipline</i>	Avoidance of confrontation and few rules and consequences.	Collaborative discussion of rules and consequences. Parents maintain authority.	Parent-determined rules and consequences.
<i>Goals</i>	Not clear	Long term 21 st century skills = creativity, collaboration, critical thinking, and communication (CQ)	Short-term performance or achievement.
<i>Expectations</i>	Not clear	Living a life of health, balance, meaning, and purpose.	Early performance and achievement with assumption this will lead to wealth, status, and thus happiness later in life.
<i>Drive in adulthood</i>	Not clear or random	Healthy, internal drive that is sustainable	Diminished and/ or dependent on external reward or pressure.

Responding to "No!"



"Dolphin" Responses and Resolutions:

- 1) Invest in your relationship with your teen
- 2) Pick your battles (with a long-term view of your teen's development rather than behaviours)
- 3) Be intentional about when and where you talk with your teen about the rules
- 4) Explain the non-negotiables
 - Validate that they may feel "bossed around"
 - Connect the non-negotiable to a family value
- 5) Set them up for success
 - Establish the structure and routine they need
- 6) Provide choice
- 7) Communicate your concern when they do not follow the expectation
- 8) Allow for natural consequences
 - Avoid punishing or rewarding behaviours
- 9) And ... don't take it personally ...

Gordon Neufeld, PhD, on consequences

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bp9XXanfWE> (3 minutes)



Responding to "No!"

90% of Problem behaviour is emotion and instinct based

- Consequences may only aggravate the problem unless the youth can control the behaviour and acted purposefully

Learning will occur with consequences if:

- Did they do it on purpose?
- Do they feel remorse?
- Do they have the ability to think twice?

Instead use emotion and motivation to change behaviour (rely on your relationship):

- "Can I count on you to do ...?"
- "Will you give it a good try?"



Let's pause for fun ...

Bingo Time!

Five in a row (any direction) wins!

There is a prize!



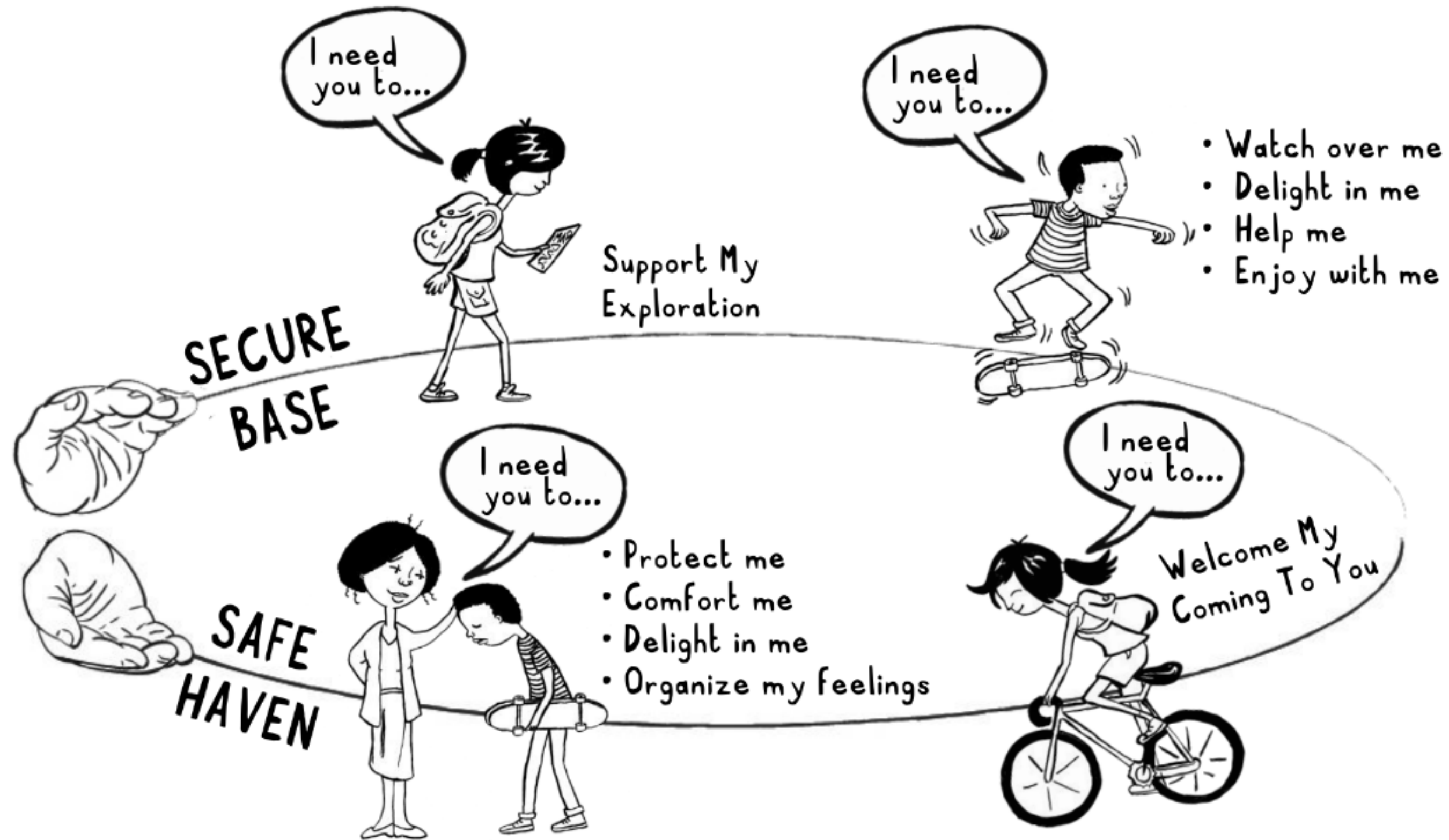
"PERFECT PARENTING"

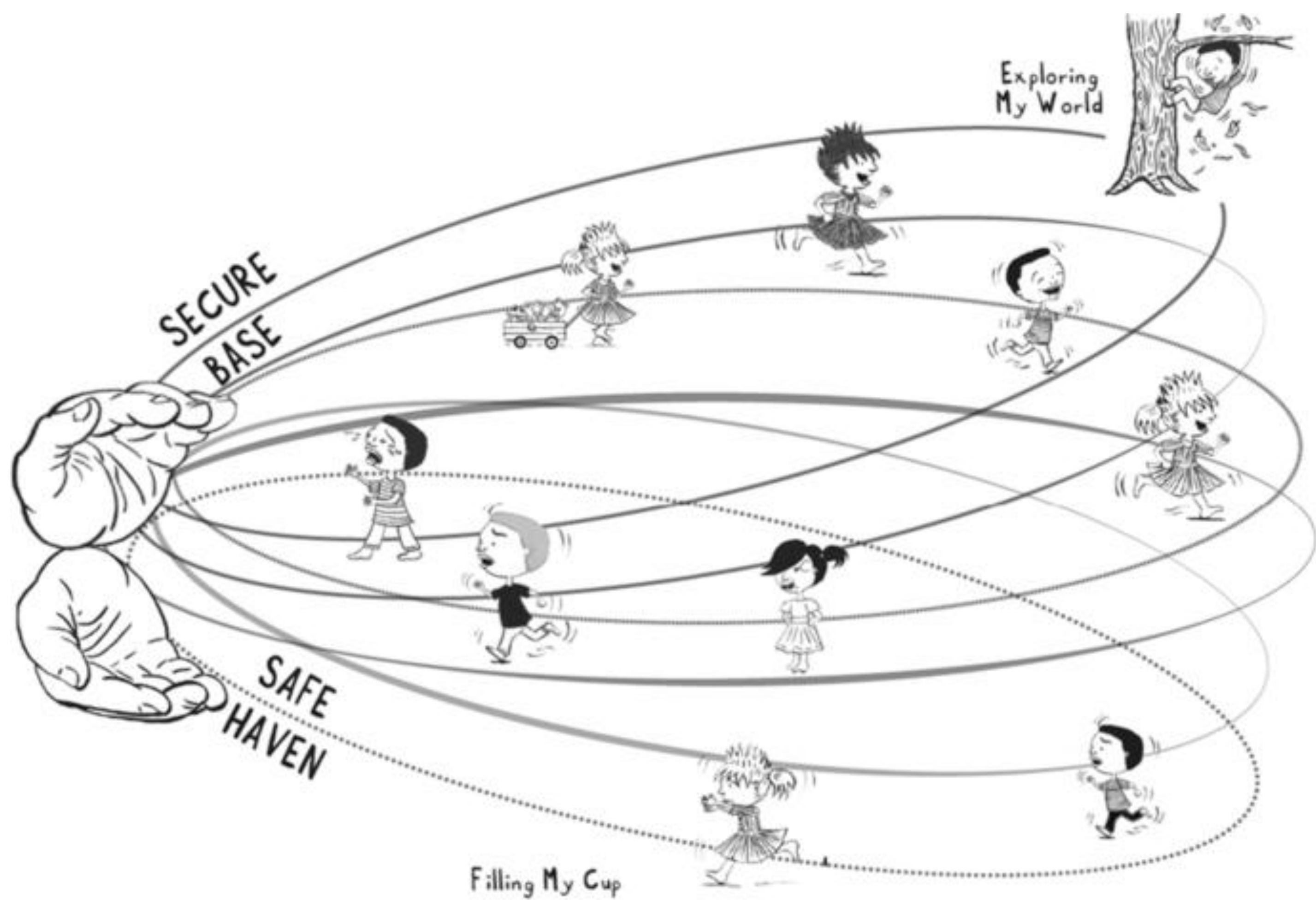


<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1wpz8m0BFM8> Circle of Security Animation (4.5 minutes)

Circle of Security®

Parent Attending to the Teen's Needs





Top & Bottom of the Circle: Moment to moment

Delighting on the top of the circle:

Indirect questions: "What are people in your class saying about - ?"

Side-by-side conversations

Try replying with a 'newspaper headline' to their story ("The Drama Continues", "There are a lot of fun things going on")

Delighting on the bottom of the circle:

"You seem upset. What's going on?" "If you want to chat at any point this weekend, I'm up for it."

Offer your empathy and compassion, believing this is what your teen needs.

Try texting: "It seems as if you had a hard morning, how are you doing now?"



ALWAYS BE: BIGGER, STRONGER, WISER & KIND.
WHENEVER POSSIBLE: FOLLOW MY CHILD'S NEED.
WHENEVER NECESSARY: TAKE CHARGE.



We may not realize we are reacting to our teen's need ...

Shark Music

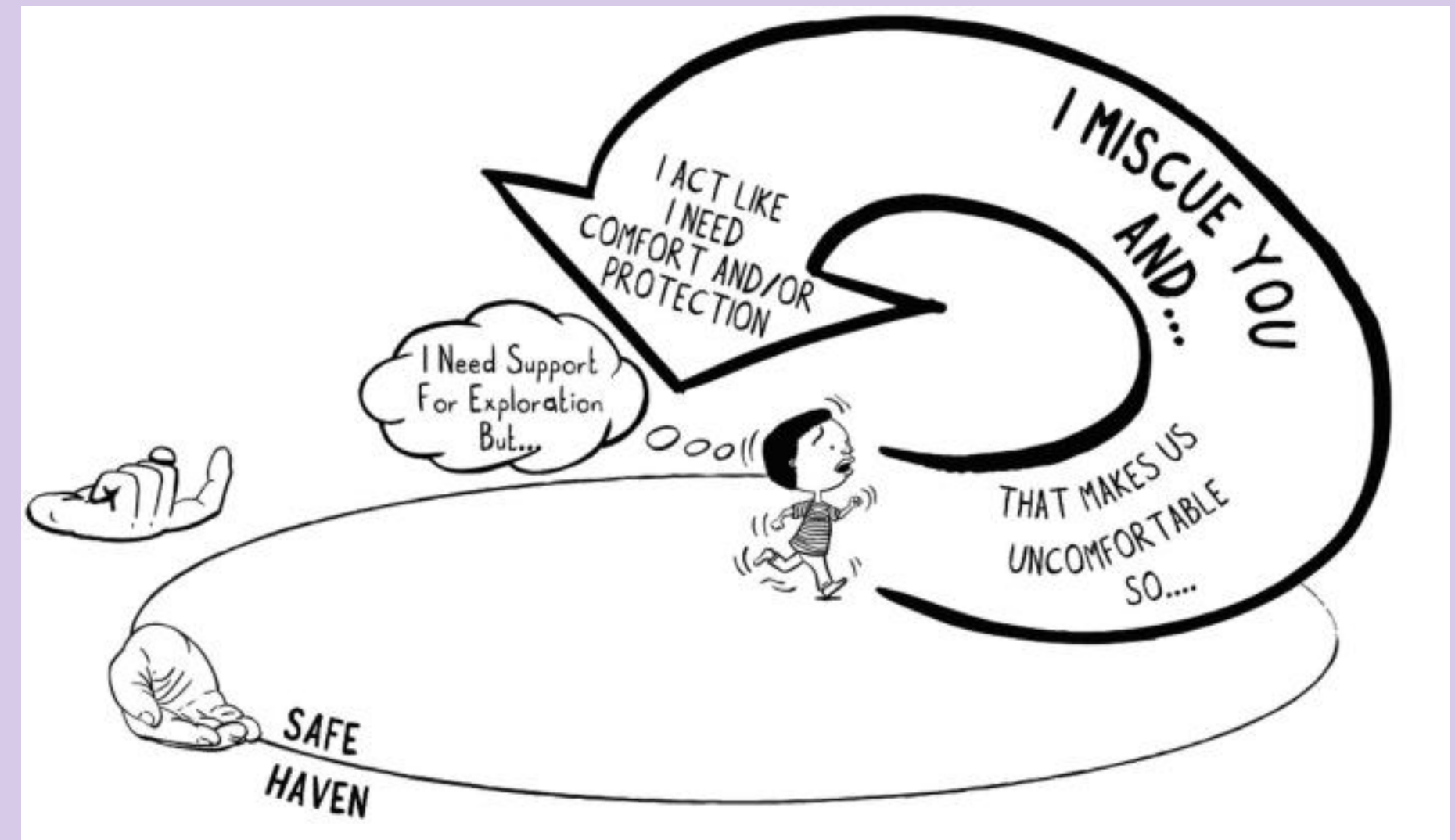
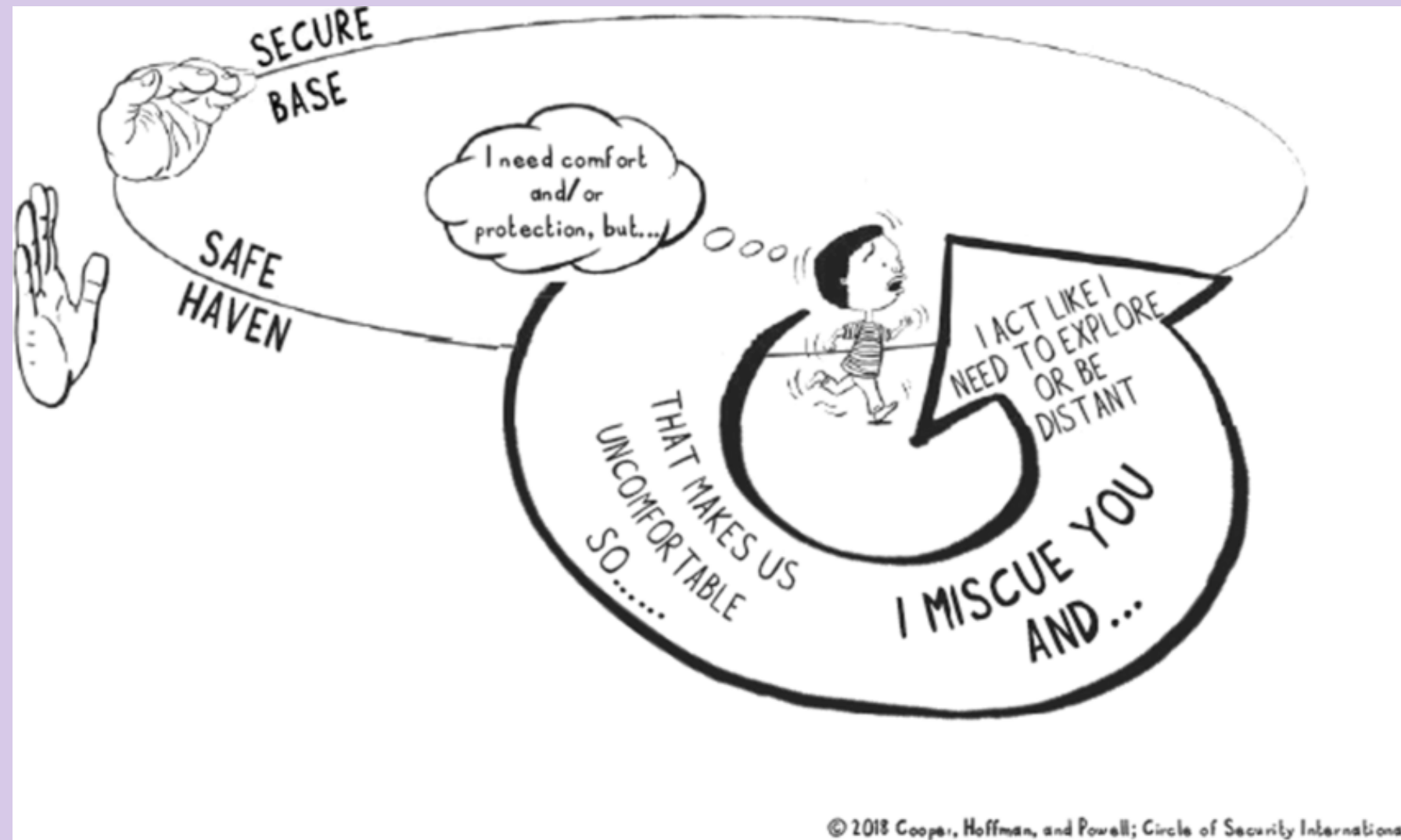
**It's not about real danger. It's
about what feels dangerous.**

**When we recognize it, we have
new choices.**



Circle of Security International

Your child may be responding to your needs ...



When we mess up ... the gift of “of course”

How do we apologize to our teenagers? (Mate, 2024)

- Do not wait for your child to initiate contact
- **Prioritize the goal:** for your child to feel and know that your relationship is greater than any argument or disagreement
- **Acknowledge** what happened, **suggest the possible impact on your child, listen and accept** as they share. (Dr. Gabor Mate says there may be no point promising you will not do it again.)





We are also held, safe & secure

Isaiah 41:10

Don't be afraid, for I am with you. Don't be discouraged, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you. I will hold you up with my victorious right hand.



The Boat & The Dock

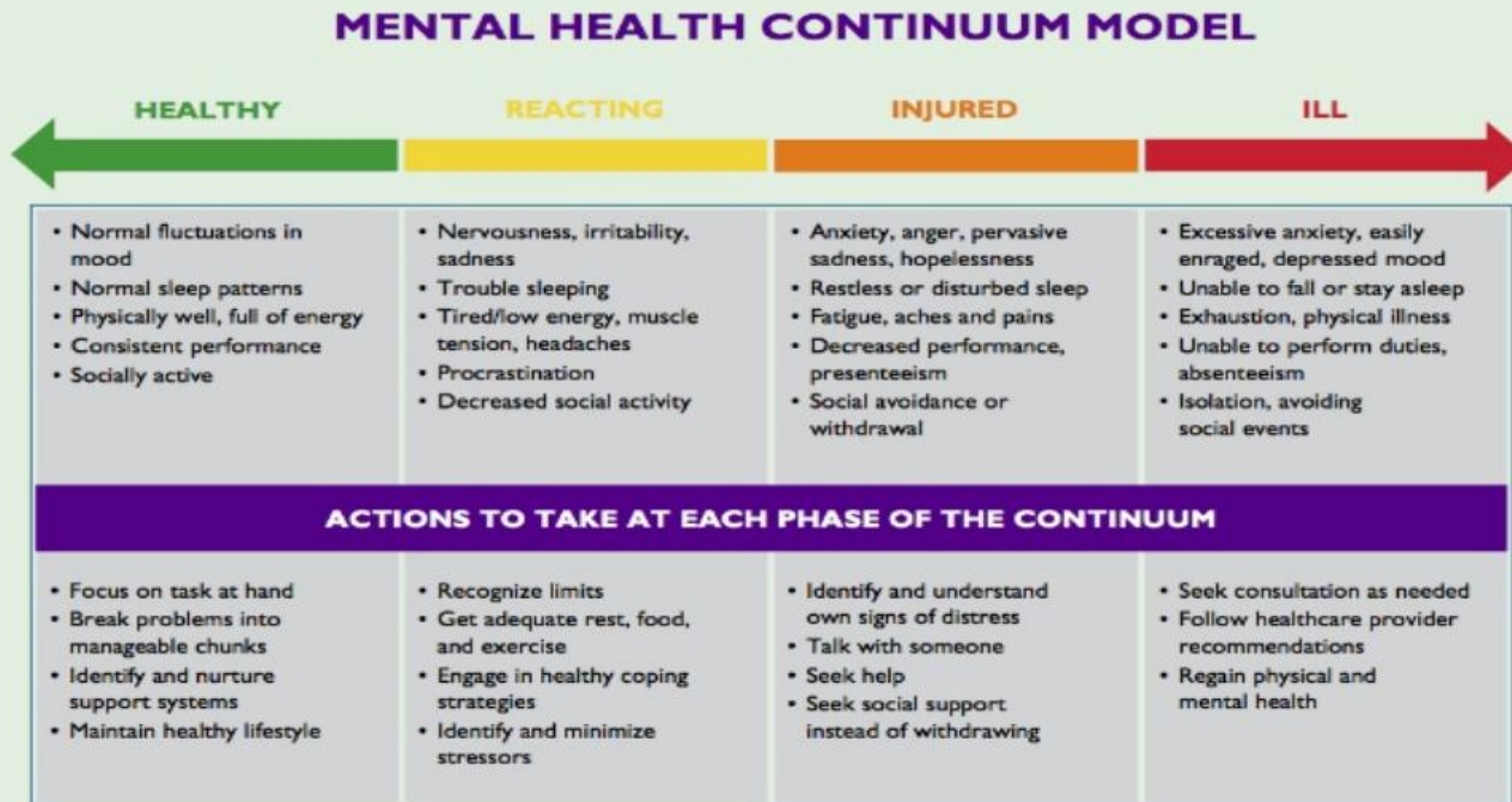
Consider:

- What is expected of the boat?
- What is the responsibility of the dock?
- Is someone to blame for the tension?



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CZEoXuHjORY> Why the adolescent brain is more emotional by Dr. Daniel Siegel (30 seconds)

When to reach out for help ...



They are their worst at home - Good to know!

**“We should bear in mind that we rarely see
the complete picture of our teenager’s
overall psychological sturdiness.”**

(Damour, 2023, p. 27)

When to reach out for help ...

Your teen
isn't at
their own
"normal"

Over-reliance
on video
games, phone
scrolling,
binge-
watching

Using
drugs or
alcohol to
cope

Internalizing
their feelings

Engaging in
repetitive /
compulsive
behaviours

For more information / support:

Online Parenting Information

[Anxiety Canada](#)

[Kidshealth.org](#)

[Mental Health Literacy](#)

[Neufeld Institute \(youtube channel\)](#)

[Stress\[Hacks\]](#)

[Understood.org](#)

Book Recommendations

[The Emotional Lives of Teenagers, Lisa Damour, PhD](#)

[Scattered Minds, Gabor Mate, MD](#)

[Hold On to Your Kids, Gordon Neufeld, PhD and Gabor Mate, MD](#)

[Your Teenager is Not Crazy, Dr. Jeramy Clark and Jerusha Clark](#)

Community Resources



[Youth Mobile Crisis Team](#) (24/7)
Phone 204-949-4777
Text 204-900-6010

[Crisis – Call or text – 9-8-8](#) (24/7)
Children's Emergency (24/7)
[\(16 + younger\): What to expect](#)

[Kidshelpphone.ca](#) (24/7)
Text 686868
Phone 1-800-668-6868

[The Link: Youth and Family Supports](#)

Phone 204-477-1722

- Family therapy
- Parenting group
- Addiction help
- Short-term counselling

[Canadian Mental Health Association](#)

Service Navigation Hub

- Phone 204-775-6442

Information about mental health and mental illness
Free programs to support mental health (for 15+)

[New Directions](#)

Registration for free parent groups begins Jan 5, 2026
Resources for families
Family therapy services

[Empowering Every Mind](#)

Free webinars
Parent and youth groups
Individual and family counselling (fee-based)
Free 20-minute intake call

Key takeaways



We have strong mental health when we acknowledge and process our emotions.

There are *many* difficult moments in parenting our teenagers. “Of course” we will not always get it right.

We can be “bigger, stronger, wiser and kind” to guide our teenagers through their emotions towards good decision-making.

We are never alone as parents. We have each other, and there are community resources to help!

Thank you for coming!



A pdf of this presentation will be emailed out!

If you have questions or would like to speak further, please reach out to Ruth Ann Goodman:
Rgoodman@mbci.mb.ca (or send an Edsby message)