

Adapting & Thriving

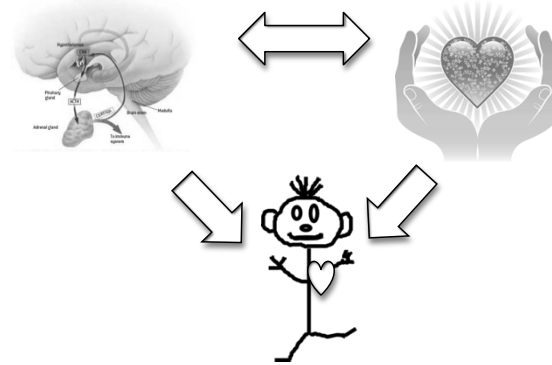
The key role of *relationship* in promoting resilience for children & youth

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Author, Discipline Without Damage: How to get your kids to behave without messing them up
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Plan

- What is adaptation?
- Why is it important?
- How can we foster it?



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*Sometimes the
things we
cannot change
are meant to
change us*



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*"God, grant me the
serenity to accept the
things I cannot change;
Courage to change the
things I can;
And wisdom to know the
difference."*



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Why adapt?

- Adaptation as resilience
 - Resilience = achieving better than expected outcomes
 - Resilience is determined by 3 things (Hunter 2013):
 1. risk factors
 2. protective factors...Relationship!!!
 3. functioning...adaptability!!!



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Why adapt?

- Adaptation as a component of development
 - Multiple perspectives
 - Perseverance
 - We are taken care of
 - Direct our energy to growing



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Why adapt?

*"Life is neither static nor unchanging
...in an inherently changing world,
any species unable to adapt is also
doomed." — Jean M. Auel*



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Why adapt?

"It is not the strongest of the species that survives, nor the most intelligent, but rather the one most adaptable to change."
— Leon C Megginson



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Why adapt?

"If you always do what you've always done, you'll always get what you always got."
— James P. Lewis



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Why adapt?

"We cannot direct the wind, but we can adjust the sails."
~ Dolly Parton



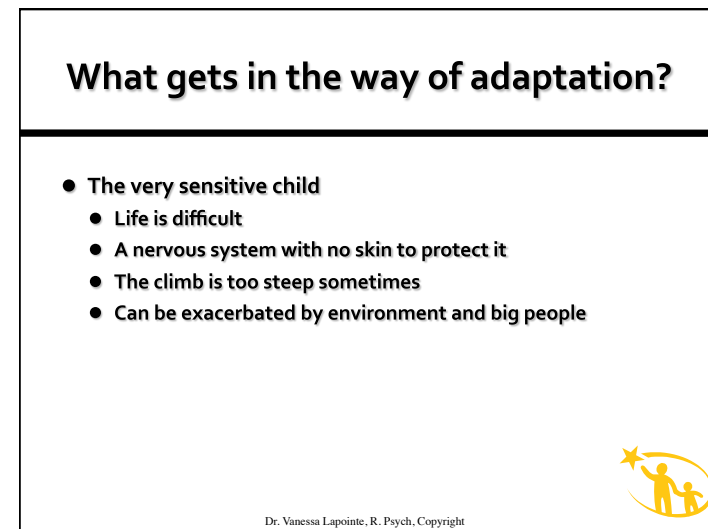
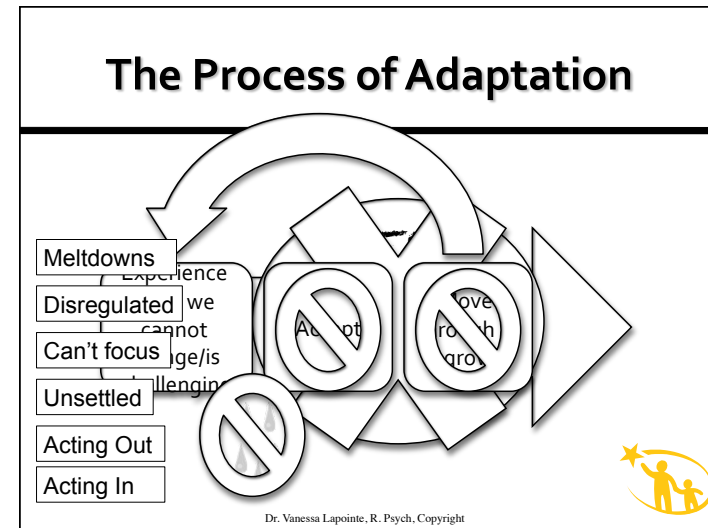
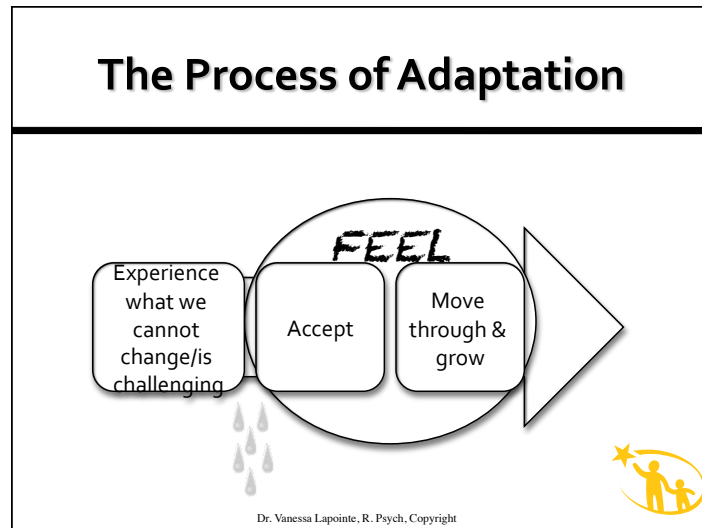
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Emotional Safety & Adaptation

- To accept the unchangeable we must be safe to fail and express big feelings about fear
- Able to feel our emotions
- Able to express our emotions
- Confident that our emotions can be "held" by those responsible for our care
- Confident that our emotions can land without reproach



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What gets in the way of adaptation?

- The child for whom no boundaries are defined
 - In order to know adaptation, we have to have experience it
 - In order to be vulnerable, we have to have an adult we can rely on to hold our big feelings for us
- If the adult has given up or fearfully backed off in an enduring way, then neither of these conditions exist.



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What gets in the way of adaptation?

- The child who is drowning in the unchangeable/ challenging
 - Situational; environmental; Trauma; Loss; Developmental exceptionalities; Life changes – sibling, move, new school, divorce, etc.
 - Overwhelmed – too much!
 - If you have too much of these things, you get “adaptively maladaptively smart”
 - You don’t let yourself blow about in the wind and be beaten down
 - You eventually lose your feelings



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What gets in the way of adaptation?

- The child whose brain is protecting them from feeling
 - They might not feel like they can *rest* ever and so they have to numb out for a little while
 - No sense of safety
 - “Numbed out and tuned out” (Dr. Gordon Neufeld)
 - Without feelings, you cannot adapt, mature, and grow up... you get stuck – there is no resilience unless you can feel



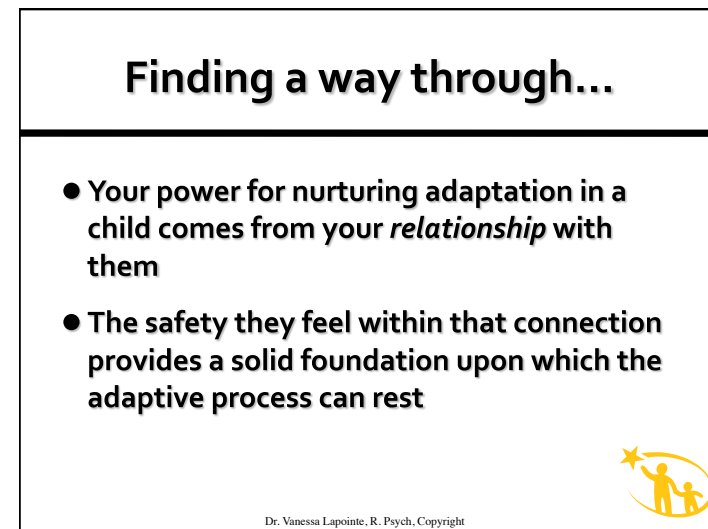
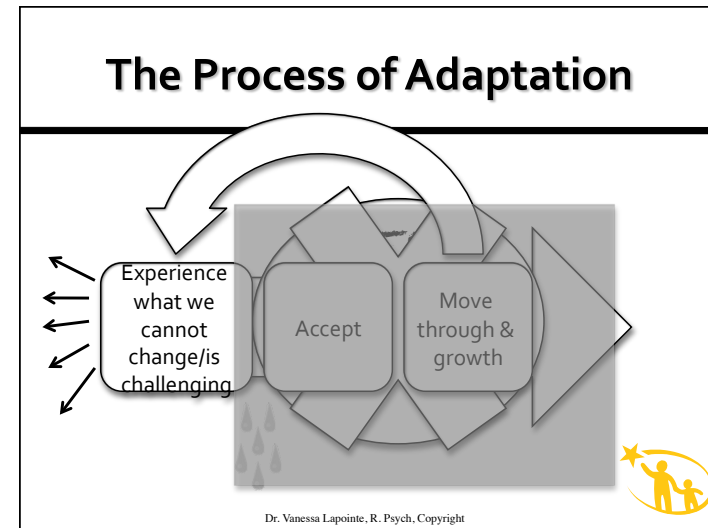
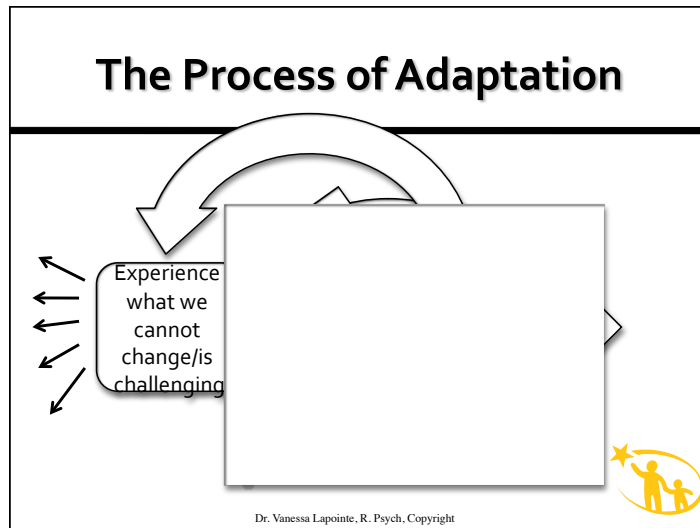
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What gets in the way of adaptation?

- The capacity for adaption for each child is a shifting entity
 - Guided by the safety they have in their existing attachment relationships
 - Concepts like emotional safety and rest have a bigger picture that is more enduring and also a moment by moment picture that can be more fleeting
 - The demands of a given day, hour or moment
 - The demands of a given environment (e.g. school compared to home)



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Finding a way through...

There is a process:

1. Take care of the things that overwhelm—rely on structures and routines; keep a small radius
2. Come alongside – support, protect, pave way
3. Move forward with the things that challenge or are difficult



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Finding a way through...

- Back off if the going gets too rough
- The moments for pushing forward will come and go
 - be confident and gentle
 - “pick your battles”
 - Rely on your intuition
- Start low and go slow



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Finding a way through...

- Be In Charge
 - Kids need that feeling of having a big person who is in charge
 - Not bossy; not parading; not in your face
 - Gentle and all-knowing
 - An adult that can *be* the answer even if they don't *know* the answer



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Finding a way through...

- Connection Security leads to Maturity
 - Children always find their way to maturity through the grounding presence of connection security
 - “Children need us to be bigger, stronger, wiser AND kind” – Circle of Security
 - If we force independence in the hopes that it will yield independence, we actually stunt adaptation
 - We must be WISE and conscious about knowing the difference between “helicopter” big person and facilitative big person



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Finding a way through...

- Be "all knowing" about the things that don't work out or go as planned
- Be "omnipotent" in a restful way
- Of course this will happen...
- You need to...
- Go ahead and...
- Walk alongside and make room for what is inevitable



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Finding a way through...

- Plan for transitions, change, the things that are difficult...
- Routines
- Plans
- Advance warnings of transition times
- Visual scripting
- Reminder of rules and routines in advance
- Visual timers with a "snooze" option



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In the Morning
Example uses Easy Daysies™
Every day Kit,
Chores & Rewards Kit

In the Washroom
Example uses Easy Daysies™
Potty/Washroom Routine Kit

After School
Example uses Easy Daysies™
Every day Kit,
Extracurricular Activities Kit

Getting Dressed
Example uses Easy Daysies™
Get Dressed Routine Kit,
Family Activities Kit

Easy Daysies™ Magnetic Fold & Go
The Easy Daysies Magnetic Fold & Go is foldable and portable. It hangs anywhere, so you don't need a magnetic fridge.
Stack Easy Daysies Magnets down the middle, or use the left and right columns ("To do" and "Done!")

At Bed Time
Example uses Easy Daysies™
Every day Kit,
Family Activities Kit,
Special Times & Clocks Kit

At School
Example uses Easy Daysies™



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Finding a way through...

- Hope in Advance

- Give the child a message of hope in advance of the things that you know will be hard.
- Remove the point of no return
- Give the ultimate soft place to land



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Finding a way through...

- Do-overs

- There is such safety in knowing that there are no absolutes in terms of "performance"
- Sometimes we all need another kick at getting it just right
- Sometimes we need a window of time to regroup or collect
 - Build this in with structure and routine
 - AVOID the feeling of contrived "consequence"



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Finding a way through...

- Limit justifications and explanations

- You cannot reason with an illogical part of the brain
- If something is a FULL STOP then you do not need to explain yourself
- Explanations are for times of discussion, not for moments of adaptation
- By diving into explanations and justifications, you end up removing the very line you are attempting to hold



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Finding a way through...

- Graceful exits...

- Sometimes you won't be able to hold onto yourself in the moment of trying to hold a line in place
- Other times you might realize that this was the wrong time to push and you need to back up
- You also need to not be seen as wavering and not being in charge
- So take a graceful exit stage left...!!



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Finding a way through...

- Get your Comfort on!
 - Connect rather than banish in moments of frustration
 - Empathize
 - Be soft
 - Nurture
 - Pick up what they put down
 - Be "the one" that "gets it"



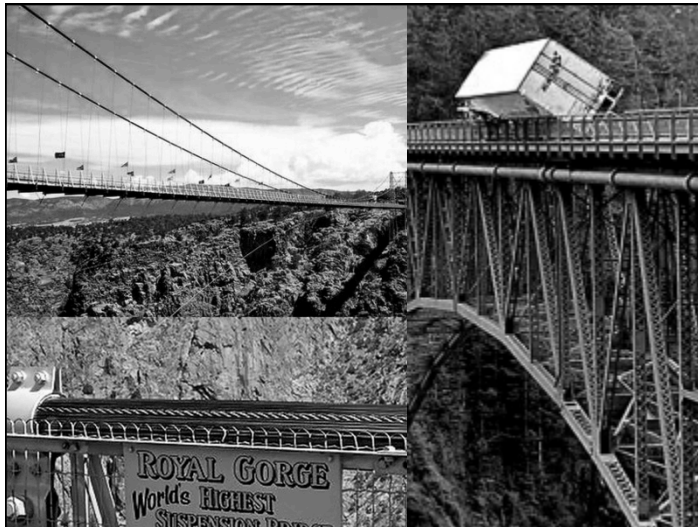
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Finding a way through...

- Boundaries & Saying No
 - Establish them and have them be known
 - But be kind and flexible with a workable grey zone
 - The magical combination of FIRM and KIND
 - "No...I know..."
 - Safety in containment
 - This is the "in charge" that must coexist with your "comforter"



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Take home points of the day



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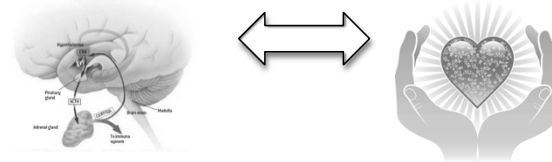
Take home points of the day

- Children need to be adaptive.
- In the world of challenges, big people have a hugely central role to play in facilitating this to promote resilience – better than expected outcomes!
- The conditions of emotional safety and relational connection must be met for adaptation to unfold
- Adults need intuition and the resultant wisdom to know how to prime the process – when to push and when to protect
- A gentle consistent approach goes a long way toward cultivating deep roots and lasting change



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