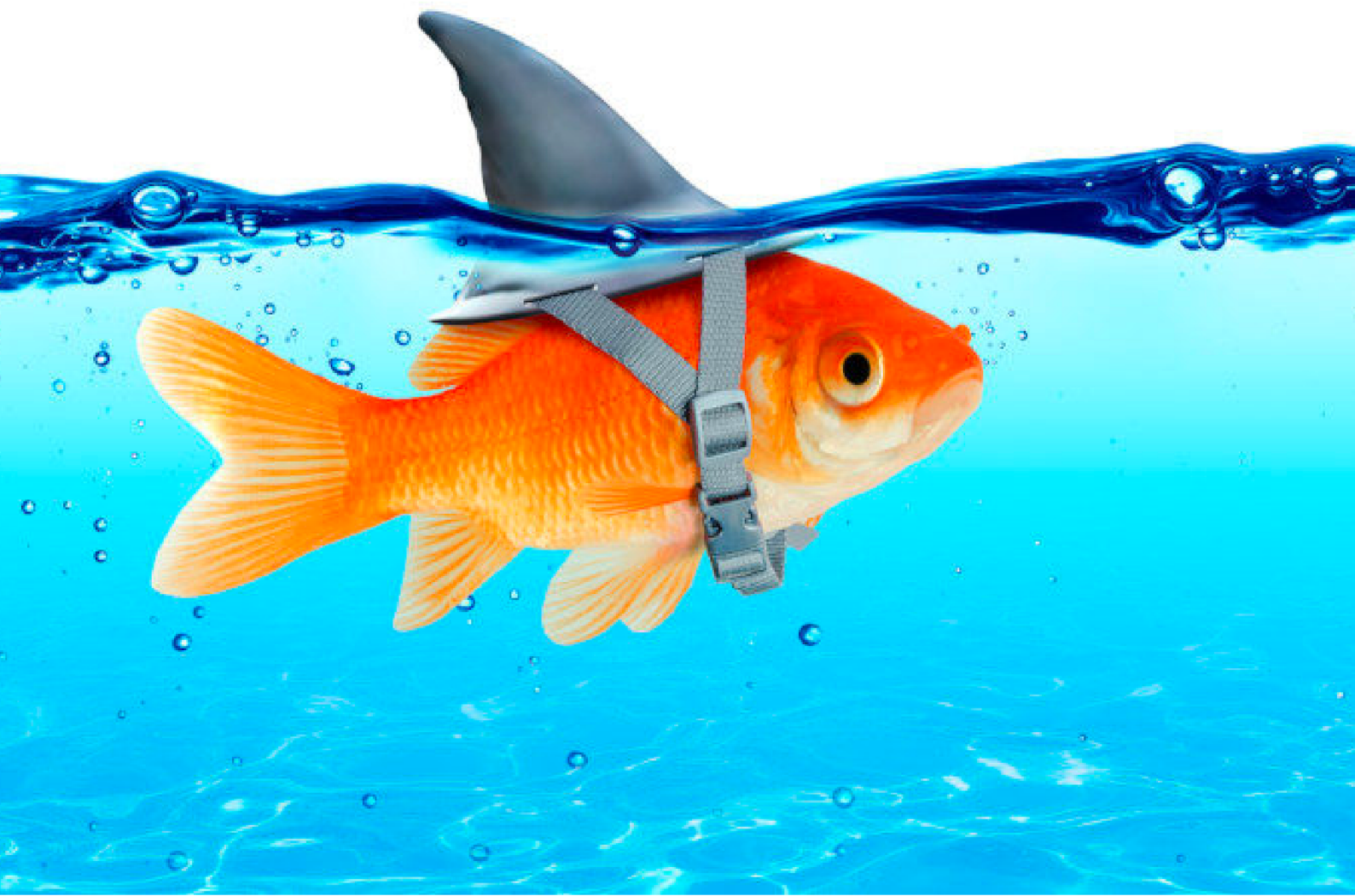
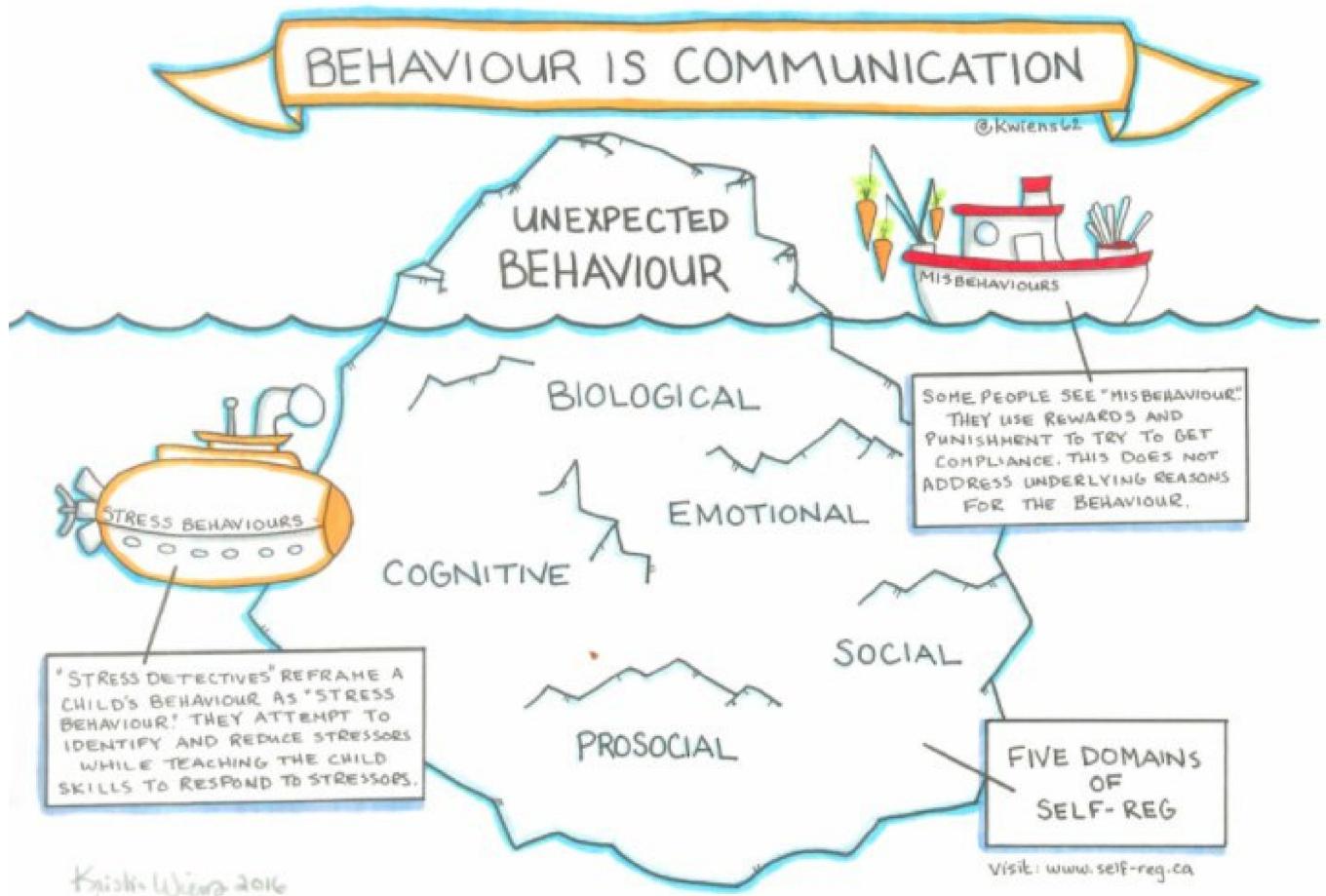


# HIDDEN

# STRESSORS

**Look beyond the behavior**





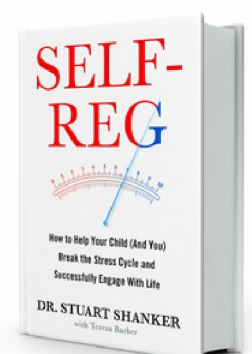
**“There is no such thing as a bad kid.” ~ Dr. Stuart Shanker**

Dr. Stuart Shanker, an expert in developmental psychology and author of *Self-Reg: How to Help Your Child (and You) Break the Stress Cycle and Successfully Engage with Life*, emphasizes the importance of self-regulation in managing stress and behavior in children:

Self-regulation is the ability to manage your own energy states, emotions, behaviors, and attention in ways that are socially acceptable and help achieve positive goals, such as learning, maintaining health, and building relationships (2017).

After decades of research, Shanker has identified five domains of stress that can affect anyone’s ability to self-regulate—especially ADHD children with the aforementioned ADHD brains. They are both the visible and invisible irritations that our kiddos are more sensitive to that we—and they—may not even be aware of.

*Bring your child into the conversation and help them become aware of the stress they don't know they don't know. Together, circle any of the stressors you think your child could be sensitive to.*




EXAMPLE STRESSORS

# BIOLOGICAL DOMAIN

@kwiens62 

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

FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT: [WWW.SELF-REG.CA](http://WWW.SELF-REG.CA)

**Biological stressors:**

These are physical discomforts like hunger, tiredness, illness, or feeling overwhelmed by their surroundings. For sensitive kids, a noisy classroom, crowded places, food textures they dislike, or even a toothache can be overwhelming. Clothes can also be stressful, like tight socks, itchy sweaters, or uncomfortable shoes. Sometimes, even a simple request to wear a jacket or shoes can lead to a meltdown. Understanding and acknowledging these stressors will help you support your child better.

## EXAMPLE STRESSORS

# COGNITIVE DOMAIN

@kwiensb2

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

FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT: [WWW.SELF-REG.CA](http://WWW.SELF-REG.CA)

### Cognitive stressors:

These stresses involve mental challenges like difficulty in understanding things or concentrating. Some tasks may seem incredibly hard for them; even simple math problems can look like advanced calculus. They may need tasks broken down into smaller parts or assistance at different times of the day.


# EXAMPLE STRESSORS

## EMOTION DOMAIN

@kwiensb2

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

FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT: [WWW.SELF-REG.CA](http://WWW.SELF-REG.CA)

### Emotional stressors:

Children with ADHD often feel emotions very intensely and struggle to regulate them. This can lead to meltdowns or emotional outbursts. It's like they're on an emotional roller coaster without any safety measures. Spotting hidden stress in their behavior can be as challenging as finding a hidden object in a puzzle.

# EXAMPLE STRESSORS

## SOCIAL DOMAIN

@kwiens62

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

FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT: [WWW.SELF-REG.CA](http://WWW.SELF-REG.CA)

### Social stressors:

These stresses arise from social interactions, like feeling left out, bullied, or misunderstood. Children with ADHD may struggle with social cues, taking turns in conversations, or controlling their impulses. Navigating social norms can be as tricky as deciphering a code, and making social mistakes can be tough on them.

## EXAMPLE STRESSORS

# PROSOCIAL DOMAIN

@kwiensb2-

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

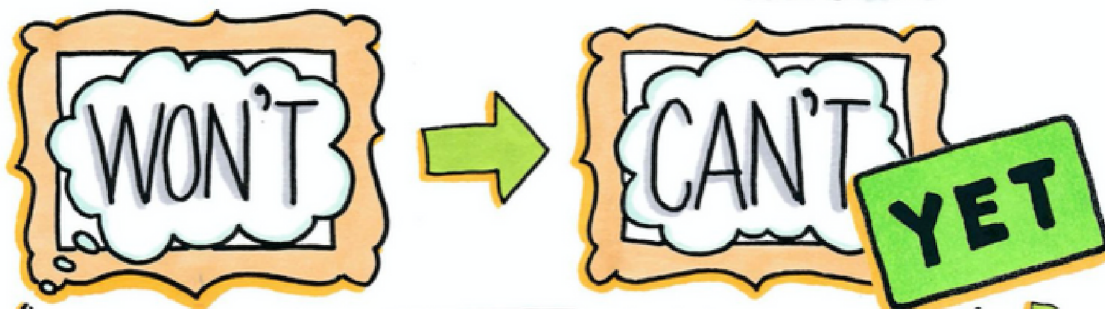
### Prosocial stressors:

These stresses come from the expectations of behaving responsibly in social situations, like being empathetic and considerate. Children with ADHD may find it hard to understand others' perspectives or cooperate. If expectations are unclear, it can make social situations overwhelming for them.

# REFRAME THE BEHAVIOUR

"KIDS DO WELL IF THEY CAN"

~ROSS GREENE



"SEE A CHILD DIFFERENTLY, YOU SEE A DIFFERENT CHILD"

~Dr. Stuart Shanker

When kids exhibit challenging behaviour we can be "STRESS DETECTIVES"...finding and removing barriers.

- FIND STRESSORS → REDUCE THEM
- FIND UNMET NEEDS → MEET THEM
- FIND SKILLS DEFICITS → TEACH THEM

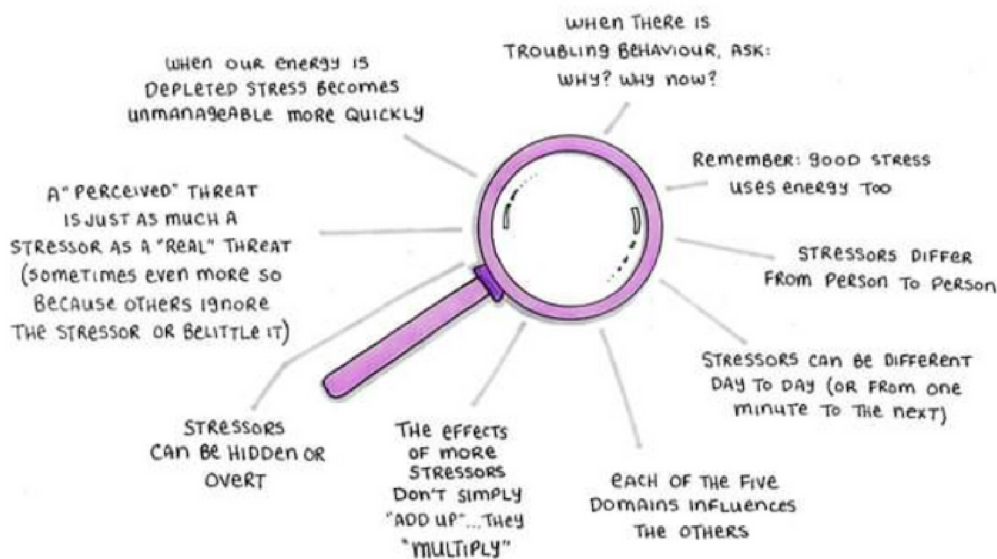
@kwiens62



SHANKER'S SELF-REG

# Recognize STRESSORS

@kwitens62



## So what's a parent to do? Stay calm. Be curious.

Is my child melting down because they're hangry, overstimulated from a video game, overwhelmed by a loud classroom, anxious about a test, or struggling because they don't understand why their friend cheated at four square during recess? Are they reacting to the argument they overheard this morning, the change in the weather, or because their cereal was too soggy? It is a constant game of Pin the Tail on the Donkey, where there are 100 tails and 100 donkeys. You may get a few hints, but the real winner is the one who stays calm through it all. When we can pinpoint the root cause, the better we can problem-solve and provide tailored support.

Sometimes, it may be easy to see where a problem lies, but rarely can you ask-and-they-will-tell, because they probably don't even know themselves (hence the word "hidden"). While you play a game of hide the stress and go seek, look for clues: hands over ears, pulling off clothes, stealing food, hiding under blankets, throwing toys. These aren't misbehaviors; they are breadcrumbs to follow. So, cool—now you get to add "detective" to your never-ending job description.

We go deeper into these in Part 3, but here is the trailer for strategies coming soon to a chapter near you (Shanker & Barker, 2017):

- Read the signs: Look for evidence of stress beyond, before, and behind the behavior
- Reframe the behavior: Understand that what might appear as misbehavior or noncompliance is often a sign of stress overload.
- Recognize the stressors: Identify which of the five domains the stressors might be coming from: biological, emotional, cognitive, social, or prosocial.
- Reduce the stressors: Modify the environment or change interactions to reduce the identified stressors. This means let them take their shoes off, go without a jacket, or not eat the food. You aren't being manipulated (don't let the lie of other people's should fluster you). However, you are being kind.
- Reflect: Develop greater awareness about how the child responds to stressors, and what worked and what didn't.
- Respond: Find more adaptive ways to deal with stress, such as using calming techniques, adjusting expectations, or seeking help.

So there you have it—the five domains that are constantly weaving in and out of your child's brain and body. By understanding how they work and interplay, we can swap one-size-fits-all discipline for empathetic, customized strategies that set our unique kiddos up for success.