



Separation and Connection

JEMMA CARTER AND REBECCA GRIFFITHS
EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGISTS



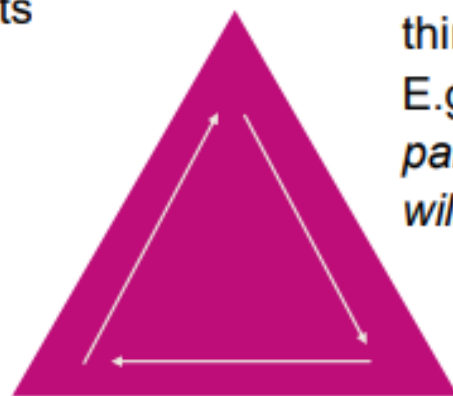
Separation anxiety – why might this happen?

The anxiety cycle

1. Thoughts...

Your child might think about worries, **bad, scary thoughts**, or things going wrong. E.g. *If I say bye to my parents something bad will happen.*

Behaviour impacts thoughts which keeps the cycle going



3. Behaviour...

These feelings can impact your **child's behaviour**. They might run away, refuse to go to school, hide, pace up and down, talk quickly, become withdrawn, cry, shout, do things to push others away, **avoid leaving and saying goodbye**.

2. Feelings...

Anxious thoughts can lead to **anxious feelings** - sick, shaky, worried, dizzy, frightened, unsettled, sad or tired.



Imagine your parent has been very poorly in hospital, and you are having serious trouble separating from them at the gate.

How will
you feel?

What might
you do?

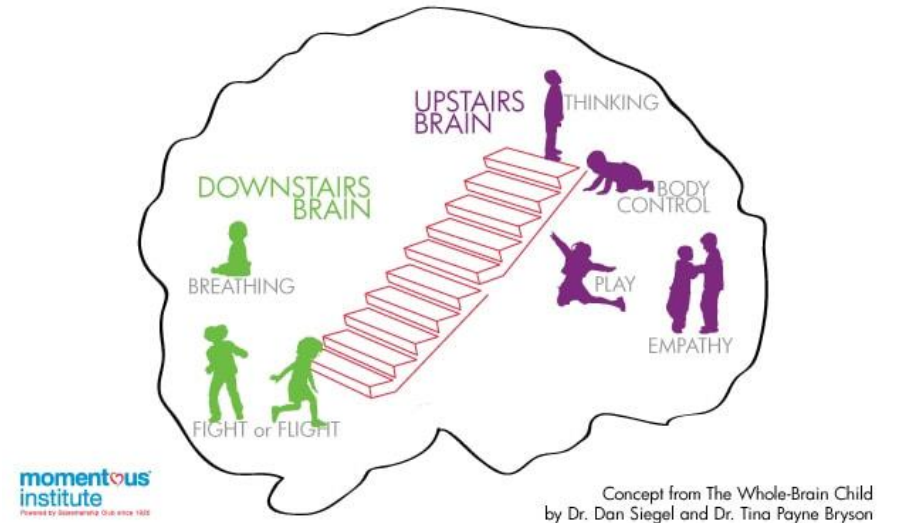
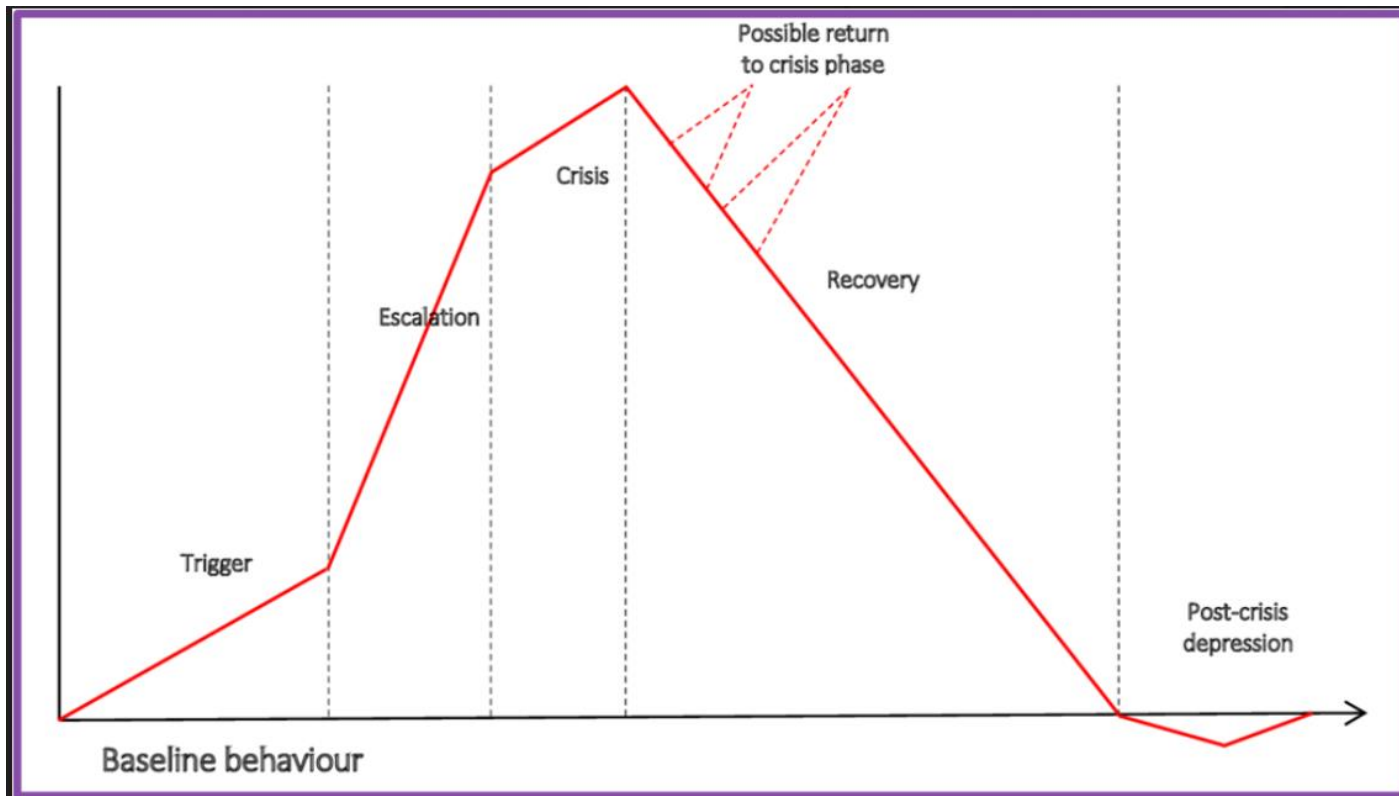
What will
make you
feel worse?

What will
make you
feel better?



So what can
we do?

1. Focus on regulation first and validation of feelings

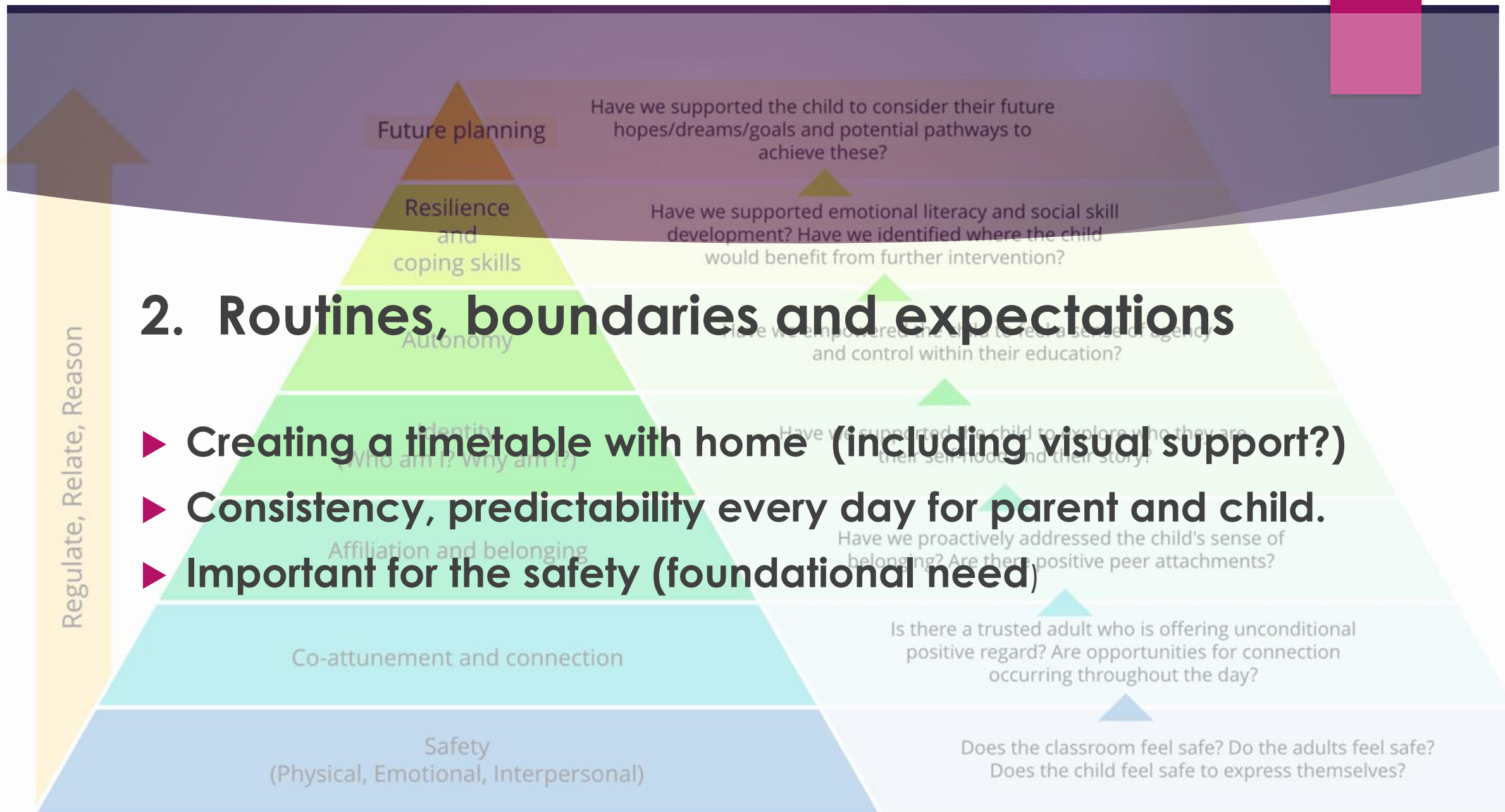


Concept from The Whole-Brain Child
by Dr. Dan Siegel and Dr. Tina Payne Bryson



2. Routines, boundaries and expectations

- ▶ Creating a timetable with home (including visual support?)
- ▶ Consistency, predictability every day for parent and child.
- ▶ Important for the safety (foundational need)



3. Language and Communication

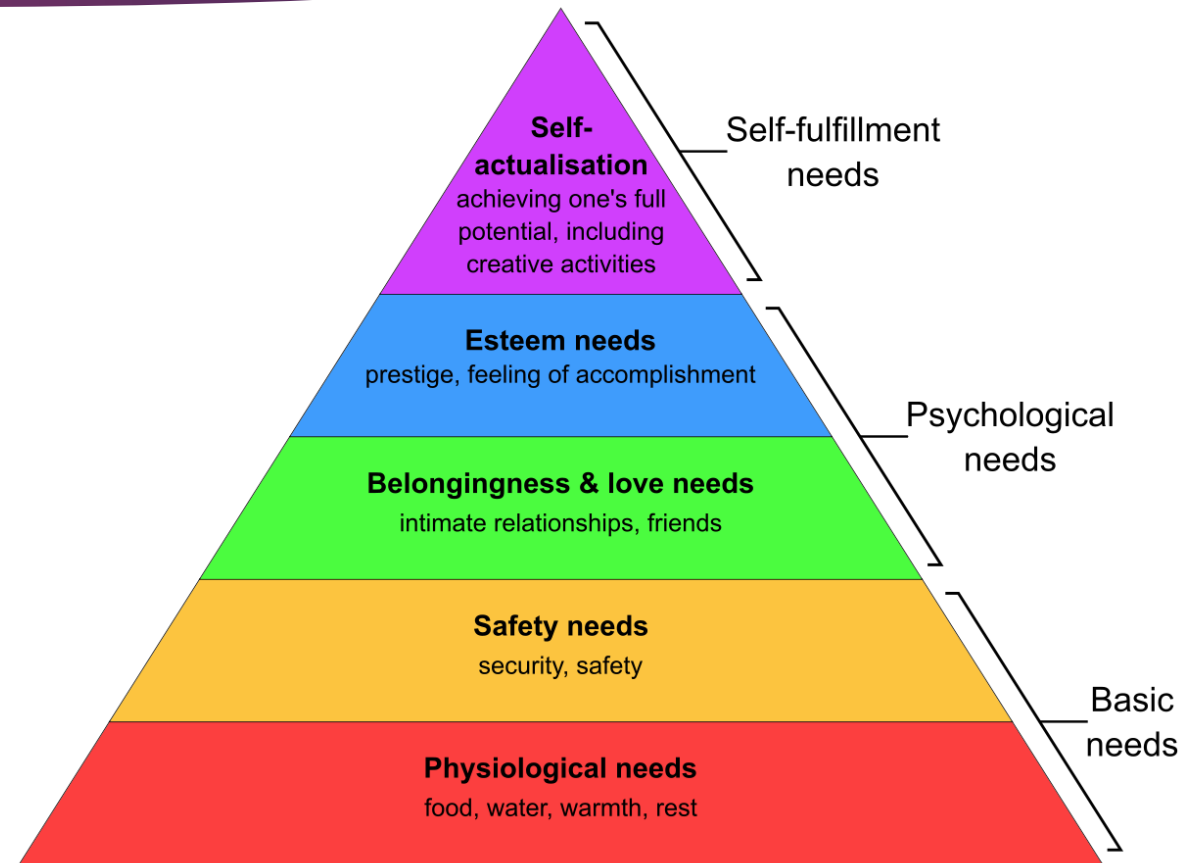
Consider language (what feels safe and comfortable for that child, why are we saying they have to separate and how are we communicating this)

Being explicit (tangible, concrete) about when the reconnection occurs.

Visual approach to demonstrate when reconnection occurs

4. Building and sustaining connection

- ▶ Relationships with adults in school
- ▶ Belonging to the school community
- ▶ Maintaining connection to home



Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

Objects and activities to maintain the connections



Connection dolls activity

