

BACKPACKS, BOOKS, & BIG FEELINGS

SUPPORTING BACK TO SCHOOL ANXIETY

HANDOUTS



Mindful Connections
Counseling, PLLC

TIPS FROM THERAPISTS TO PARENTS

- Look beyond your child's behavior to identify what may be causing their behaviors and what they may be feeling in their body. Try to identify whether your child is in or out of their window of tolerance (more information about this concept on page 4).
- If your child is out of their window of tolerance, they may need you to co-regulate with them. Some examples of co-regulation are in this handout!
- Help your child identify healthy stress vs unhealthy stress- help them identify what they notice in their body when unhealthy stress comes up.
- Try some self-soothing techniques with your child to help them when stress comes up.
*Pro tip: practice these techniques during moments when your child is within their window of tolerance so (hopefully) they will be easier during moments of stress.
- We recommend parents having a transition object, such as a special bracelet, charm, etc. for their child as a reminder that you're always thinking of them and will be right back to pick them up at the end of the day.

SCHOOL FOCUSED TIPS

- If you have a small child starting school for the first time, remember that your child will look to you for cues of safety or worry. If you are confident during drop off, give a quick kiss or hug goodbye, and leave them with a safe adult at school, it will help more than having an extra long goodbye.
- Determine how early is appropriate for your family to begin talking about school, and once you do, read books about school or practice the commute to school to normalize the experience.
- Take some time for you after drop off! Remind yourself of what an amazing parent you are and all the fun experiences your child will soon have with new friends, teachers, and adventures!

*If your child has what feels like an unusually long time adjusting to school, we encourage parents to reach out to their school counselor, or a play therapist like us!

HEALTHY STRESS VS UNHEALTHY STRESS

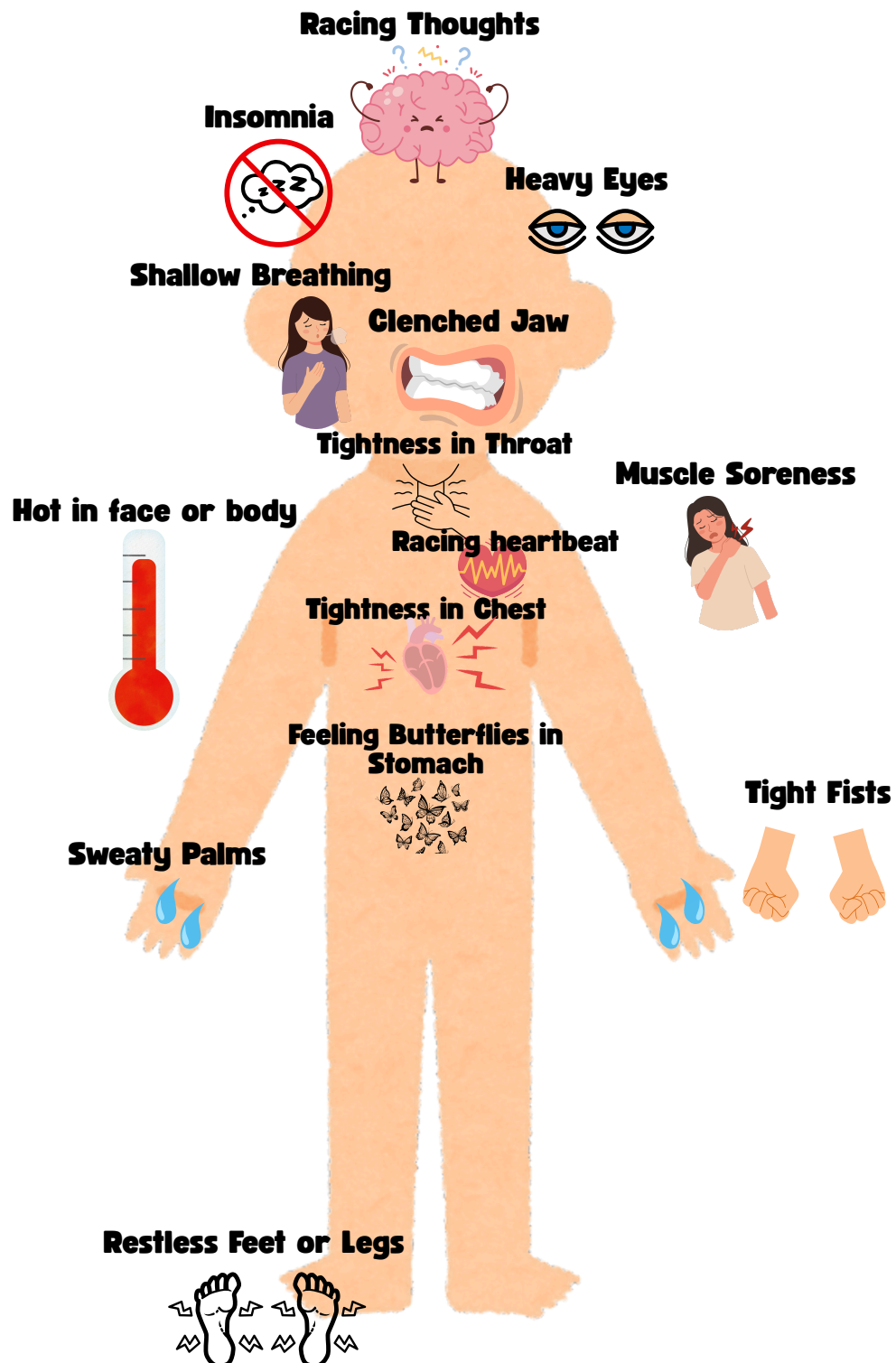
HEALTHY STRESS	VS	UNHEALTHY STRESS
• Motivating • Increases focus • Improves performance • Can be exciting • Lasts for a short period of time • There is no threat or fear		• Decreases performance • Feels unpleasant • Can be short or long term • Is perceived to be outside our coping abilities • Causes anxiety or concern • Causes health problems

NAME SOME EXAMPLES:

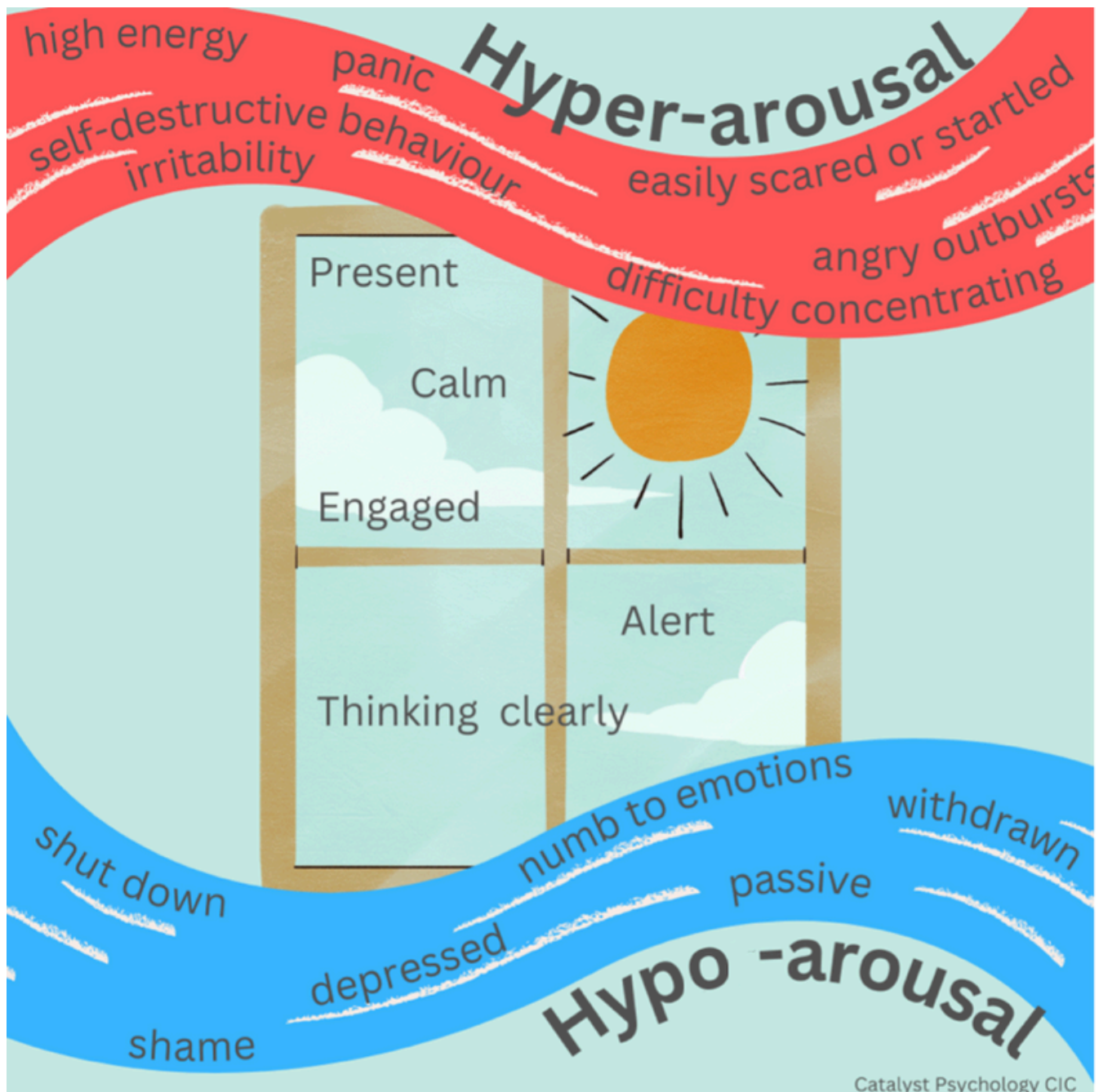
HEALTHY STRESS

UNHEALTHY STRESS

WAYS STRESS CAN SHOW UP IN YOUR BODY



WHERE DOES YOUR BODY FEEL ON THE WINDOW OF TOLERANCE?

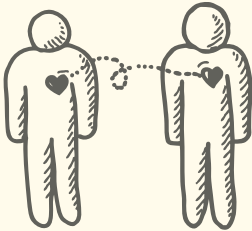


FOR AN EXPLANATION OF THE WINDOW OF TOLERANCE, VISIT THIS WEBSITE:
[OCPSYCHOTHERAPYCENTRE.COM/WINDOW-OF-TOLERANCE/](https://ocpsychotherapycentre.com/window-of-tolerance/)

SOME PRACTICAL TIPS FOR:

CO-REGULATING WITH YOUR CHILD

Why Co-Regulate?



Children do not yet have the skills to regulate their nervous systems independently.

Children must first “borrow” your nervous system to feel safe and regulated.

Your calm and steady presence will help your child return to their “thinking brain”.

Co-regulation strengthens the parent-child relationship.

Adult Regulation Strategies

To create space for your child to regulate, you must first find your own steady presence.

**You must put
on your own
“oxygen mask”
first!**

Silently acknowledge
and accept your own
feelings.

**“I’m feeling frustrated and embarrassed.
That’s OK. I’m allowed to feel this way”.**

Take a few regulating
breaths.

**Inhale for three, exhale for four.
Repeat as many times as needed.**

Silently define your
role.

**“My job is not to end this tantrum. My
job is to keep everyone safe”.**



Co-Regulation Strategies

Once you feel steady, you can support your child's regulation.

Keep this page
on your fridge!

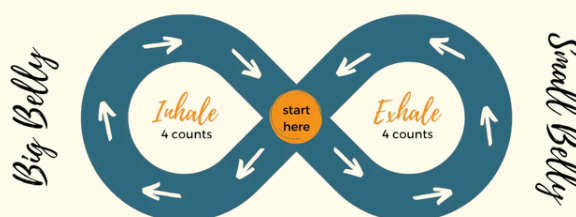
Use a calm & soft voice.
Kneel on your child's level.
Reflect your child's feeling.
Communicate that you are there for them.

**"You feel really mad. It's OK to feel mad.
I'm right here with you."**

Offer nurturing touch, like a hug or high-five.
Model breathing and other body-based strategies.



Figure 8 Breath



- 5 things you can see
- 4 things you can hear
- 3 things you can feel
- 2 things you can smell
- 1 thing you can taste

Find Your Calm

A resource for kids!



Think of a pause button and pause any worried thoughts.

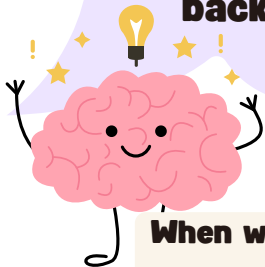
Name your feeling.

Say a positive thought to yourself.



Take slow deep breaths as you think of a peaceful and calm place. Imagine what you see, hear, smell, and feel in this relaxing place.

Think of your favorite color. Name everything around your space that is your favorite color. This is a small challenge that helps you get back in your thinking brain.



When we experience strong emotions like anger, sadness, worry, and frustration we are not able to think clearly. The thinking part of our brain turns off.

Taking deep breaths, naming your feeling, and trying small challenges are ways to turn your thinking brain back on.



Repeat one of these statements as you connect each finger to your thumb

It will be okay.

Just take deep breaths.

I can do this.



REFERENCE PAGE WITH LINKS

Click on the links below to see more detailed information from some of our slides.

- **Stress graphic link (slide 4)**
- **Signs of stress in children (slide 5):**
- **Window of Tolerance (slide 6)**
- **Co-regulation (slide 8)**
- **Growth Mindset (slide 11)**
- **Butterfly Hugs (slide 17)**
- **Figure 8 Breath (slide 18)**
- **Hot Chocolate Breathing (slide 19)**