



The Many Face(t)s of Stress:

A Positive Perspective on Coping With Stress

Dr. Chris Bogart, *Executive Director, Sasco River Center*

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Stress and Wellness

- *“My stress stresses me out to the point where I’m too stressed to deal with stress.”*

Instagram Post

- *The greatest weapon against stress is our ability to choose one thought over another.*

William James

- *“Anxiety is the handmaiden of creativity.”*

T.S. Eliot

Agenda

- Some Definitions and Terms
- A few sobering statistics
- Why is this particularly relevant now?
- A Developmental Perspective
- The brain and adaptability
- Fostering emotional adaptability through self care
- Tips for strengthening your kids and your own emotional adaptability
- Some Resources
- Conclusions



Some Definitions

➤ **Eustress**

➤ **Distress**

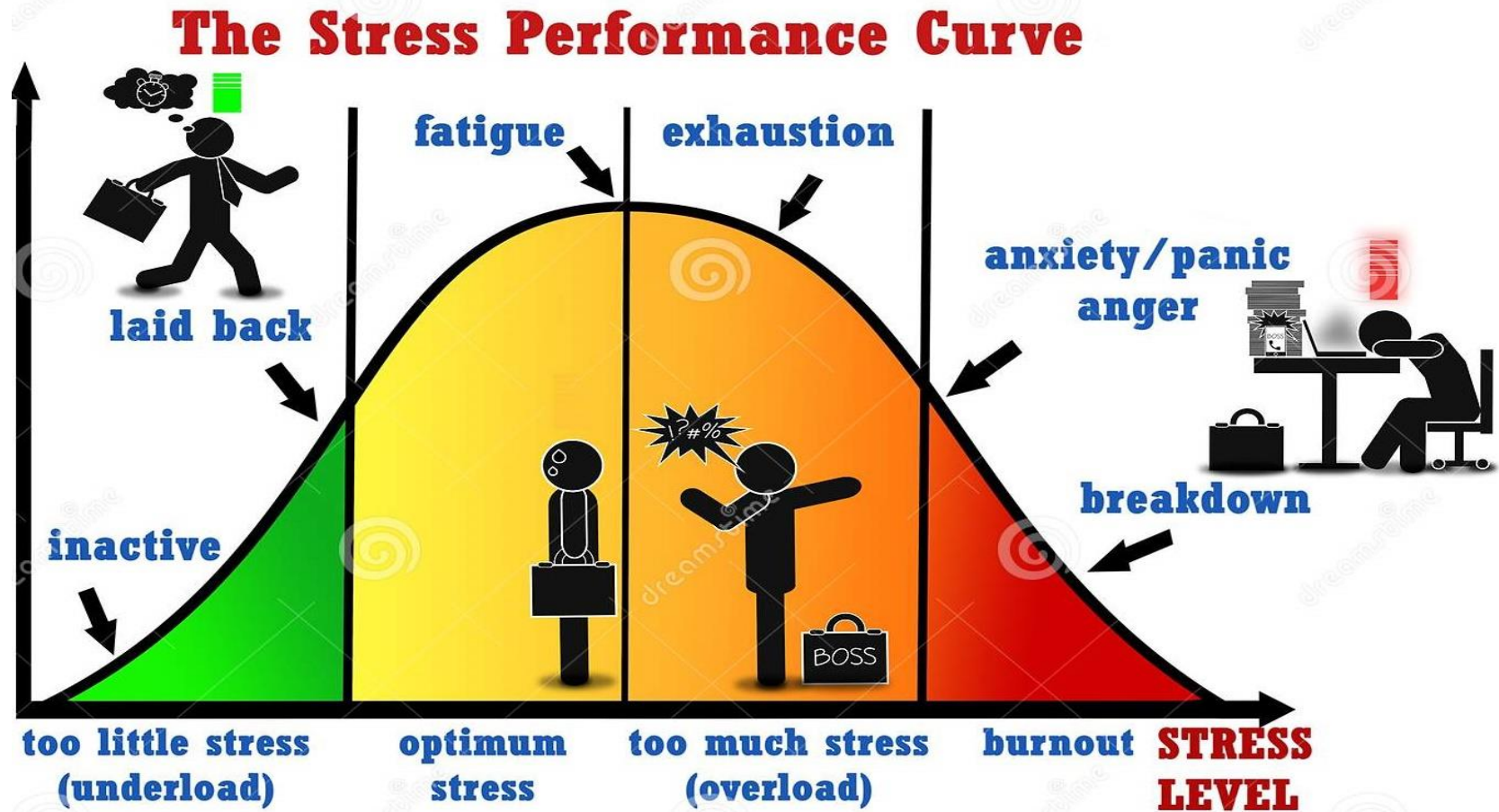
➤ **Anxiety**



➤ **The body's alarm system**

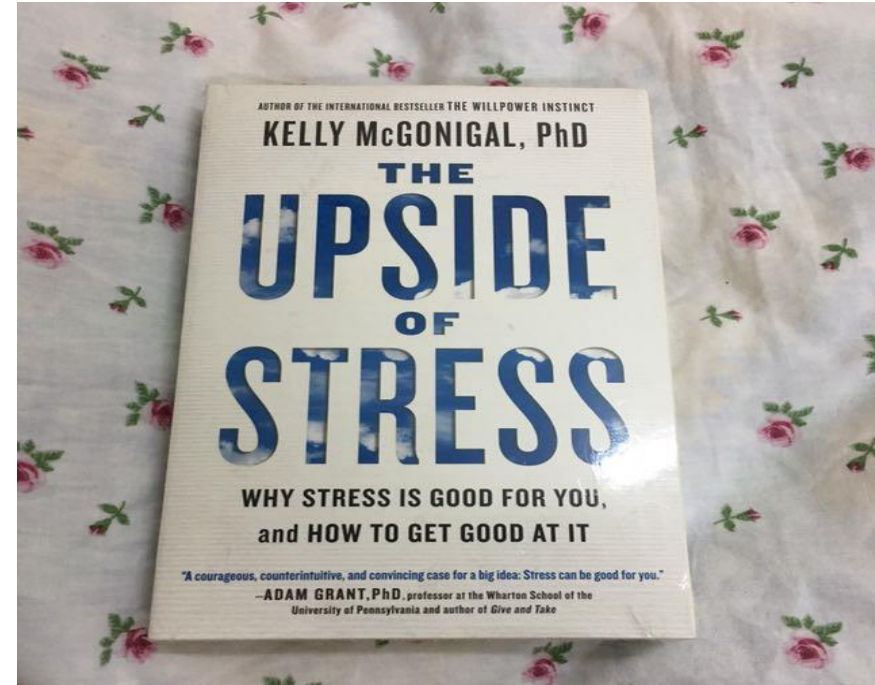
➤ **Many terms: social anxiety, generalized anxiety, PTSD, phobias, ...**

Yerkes-Dodson Law



The Upside to Stress

- **Stress is inevitable**
- **Rethink & Embrace**
- **The Stress Mindset**
 - **Illness vs. Growth**
 - **Challenge response vs. threat response**
 - **Adversity makes you stronger**



“A stressful life is a meaningful life”

Statistics on the Anxiety Epidemic

Several recent studies have documented a marked increase in reported cases of anxiety:

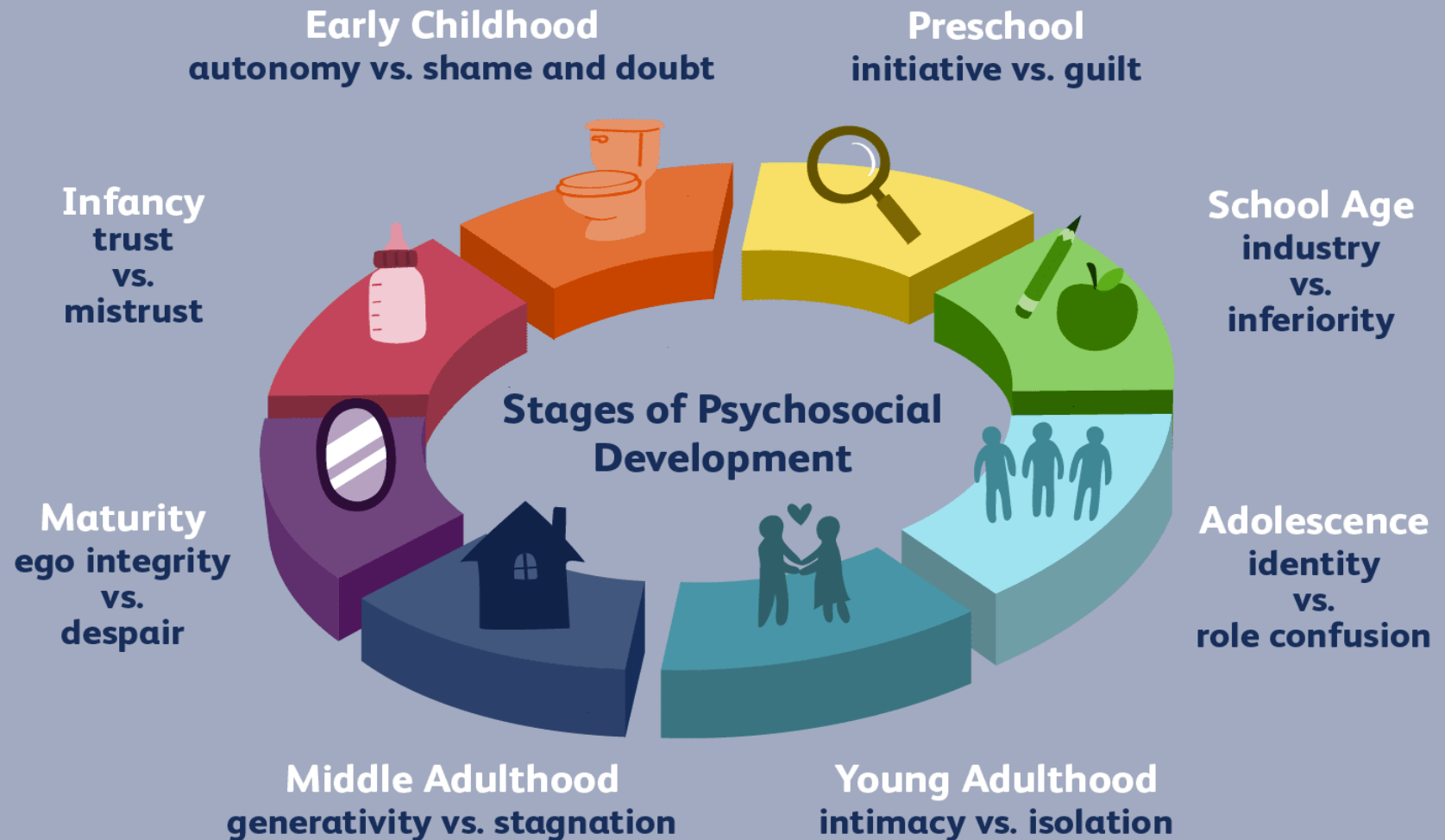
- Nearly one in three 13 – 18-year-olds meet criteria for an anxiety disorder (Centers for Disease Control, 2017).
- Gallup's annual Lifestyle Poll reports that about 40% of Americans report stress in their daily lives (Gallup, 2019)
- Direct link found between chronic stress and risk for adult depression (Univ. of New Hampshire, 2003)
- Anxiety disorders are the most common mental illness in the U.S., affecting about 18% of the population yearly (APA, 2020)

What is Going On?

Current Leading Theories:

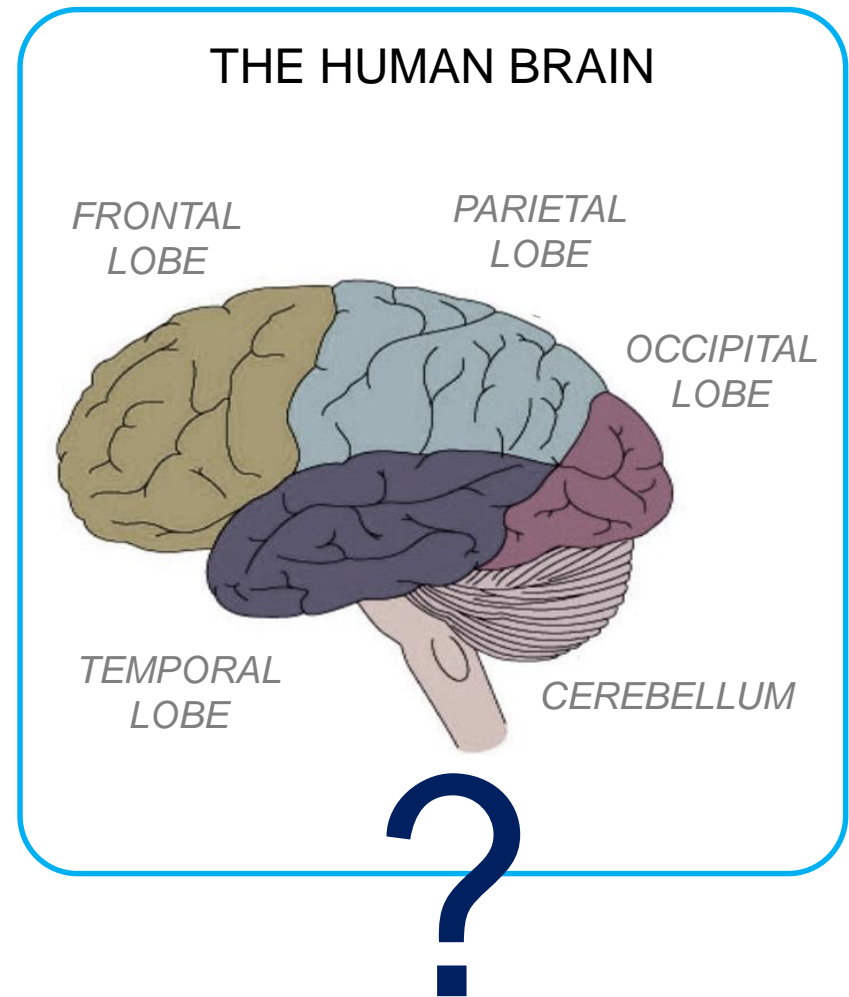
- Technological Changes
- Surge Capacity Exceeded – Tara Haele
- The Biological Model
 - Genetic Theories
 - Cognitive Theory
- The Developmental Model – Erik Erikson

Typical Psychosocial Development



The Human Brain & the Unknown

- The human brain hates the unknown
- The human brain hates to be reminded of our lack of control
- Unknown + lack of control = triggered emotional centers
- Triggered emotional centers = rigidity and reduction in logic
- Thus, we need to maximize predictability
- And we need to stay in the present to focus upon what we can control



Adaptability is:

The human capacity to face, adjust to and ultimately learn from life's experiences and challenges.

FLEXIBILITY

RESILIENCE

SELF CONTROL

It is not the strongest of the species that survives, nor the most intelligent. It is the one that is most adaptable to change.

Charles Darwin

naturalist, geologist and biologist

Adaptability Through Self-Care

- Acknowledge the bumps in the road
- “First, put on your own oxygen mask...”
- Focus on what you can control
- “Stay Present” – Mindfulness!
- Take time to relax
 - Take some “ME” time
 - Regular sleep, exercise, diet
 - Pick your “turn off” time
- Socialize (safely)
- Turn to others for help



The Importance of Staying Present

- > “Your Surge Capacity is Depleted” – Tara Haelle
 - Acknowledge the feelings
 - Radical Acceptance

- > Focus on what you can control
 - Dr. Michael Maddaus – why we get pleasure and calm out of little projects
 - Make peace with “No”

- > “Stay Present” – Mindfulness!
 - Headspace (for you and kids)
 - Stop, Breathe and Think
 - Smiling Mind



The Importance of Sleep

- Research shows that lack of good sleep impairs attention, working memory, mood regulation and executive functions
- Drop of 12 – 18 months in cognitive functions
- Impact of screens on sleep
- Tips for proper sleep hygiene
 - No food for 90 – 120 minutes before sleep
 - Relax into sleep for one hour
 - Use bed only for sleep
 - Keep room cool and dark

The Importance of Play

- Play = Time spent without purpose
- Play is the language of children
- Play increases creative energy
- Create a “Family Playlist”

The opposite of play is not work; the opposite of play is depression.

Dr. Stuart Brown
National Institute for Play

The Importance of Laughter

“Laughter is the best medicine”

Proverbs, The King James Bible

Medical Benefits of Laughter

- Boosts the immune system
- Relaxes the whole body for 45 minutes
- Triggers release of endorphins
- Protects the heart
- Burns Calories
- Reduces impact of negative emotions
- Helps you stay mentally healthy
- Strengthens relationships

Practicing Gratitude

Two key components

- Affirm the good things you've received
- Acknowledge the role other people play in providing goodness in your life

Medical Benefits

- Strengthens immune system, improves sleep patterns, reduces loneliness

Steps in a gratitude practice

- *Gratitude journal; remember the bad; share with others; focus on senses; visual reminders; go through the motions; gratitude meditation*

When to Seek Help

- Appetite or sleep problems
- Frequent physical complaints
- Prolonged depressed affect/hopelessness
- Nightmares
- Apathy
- Threats of harm to self or others
- Body image distortion
- Running away
- Strange thoughts or unusual behaviors

Some Resources

BOOKS

- “Rising Strong” *by Brene Brown*
- “Building Resilience” *by Kenneth Ginsburg*
- “Psychology of Gratitude” *by Robert Emmons and Michael McCullough*
- “Everyday Mindfulness” *by Jon Kabat-Zinn*

APPS

- Headspace; Stop, Breath, Think; Smiling Mind

Blogs & Podcasts

- Tiny Buddha
- Unlocking Us (Brene Brown)
- The Positive Psychology Podcast
- The Anxiety Podcast



Some Conclusions

- Change = Stress
- Stress is inevitable
- Stress is not a bad thing
 - Stress management = resilience
 - “**You Learn**” by Alanis Morissette
- Stay in the present
- Focus on what you can control
- Practice gratitude
- Self care and self compassion are the keys!

The only
constant in
life is change.

Heraclitus of Ephesus
Ancient Greek philosopher

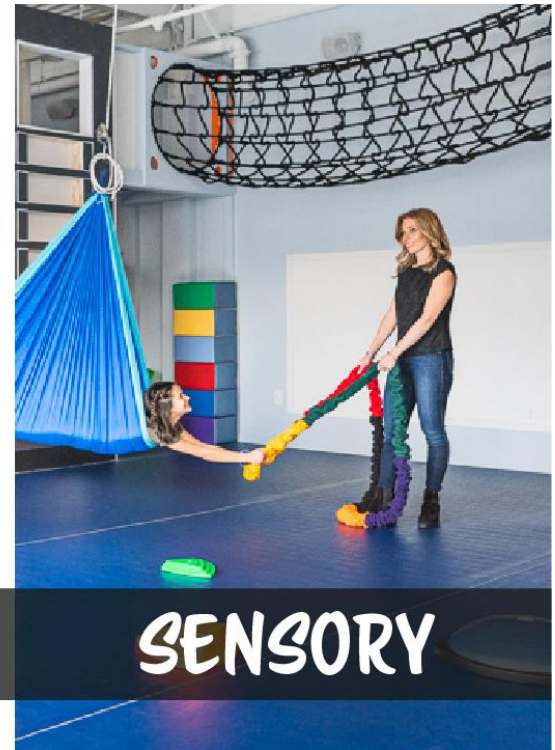
Sasco River Center: Who We Are



TESTING



THERAPY



SENSORY

Sasco River Center is a collaborative and multidisciplinary center
for evaluation & treatment of developmental concerns
Merger of Sensory Kids & The Southfield Center for Development
Locations in Darien, Stamford & Wilton

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