

Building Emotion Regulation Skills in Your School-Age Child: Navigating Big Feelings in a Digital Age

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Foundations for Emotional Wellness
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PHILOSOPHY & PRINCIPLES

- > [Our Philosophy](#)
- > [Security, Child Development, & Inquiry](#)
- > [Our Principles](#)
- > [Embracing Diversity](#)
- > [Contributions to U of T](#)

Security

“...Emphasizes creating a safe, supportive environment where children feel valued and confident to take risks.”

Child Development

“The school takes a holistic approach, nurturing cognitive, physical, social, emotional, and prosocial development.”

Inquiry

“...Understanding of the world through active engagement and curiosity.”

Enhancing Security

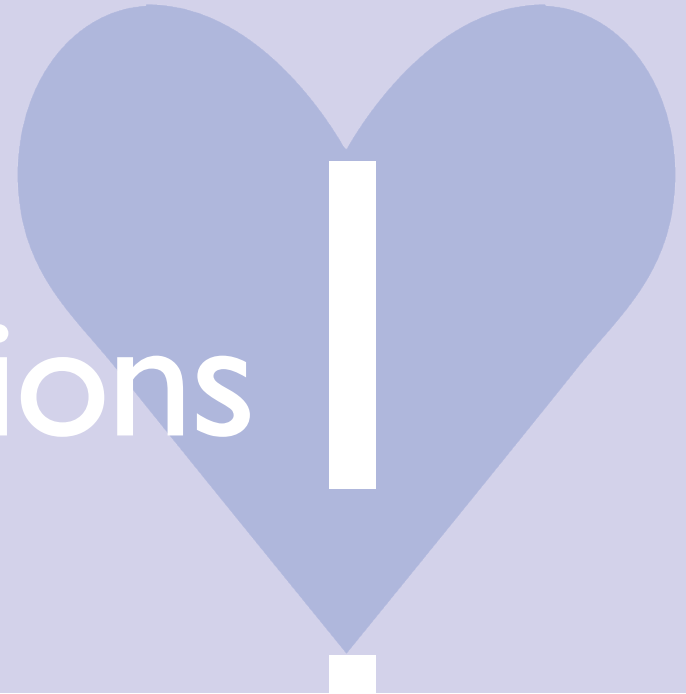
Understanding Emotions

Building Regulation: Balanced Parenting

Enhancing Parental Warmth and Connection

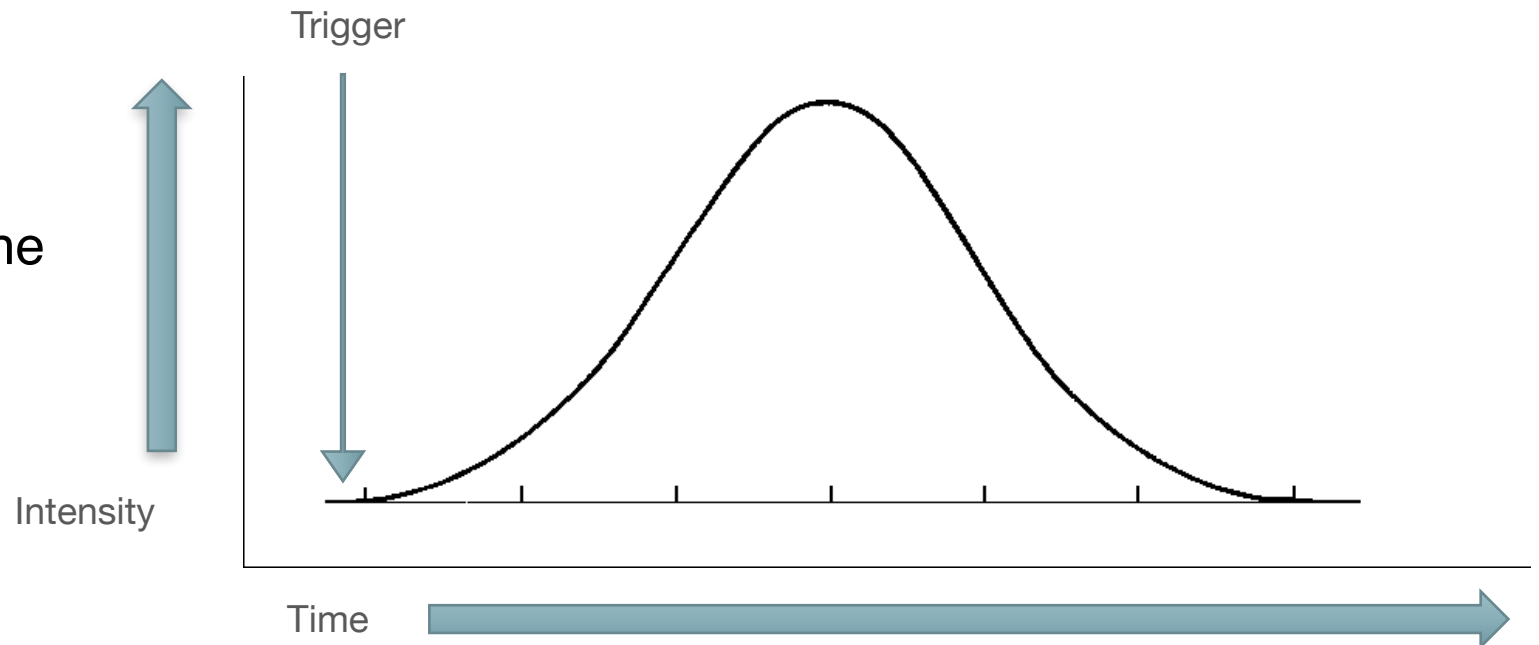
Enhancing Parental Firmness & Sturdiness

Understanding Emotions



Understanding Emotions Complete Emotional Experiences

- Emotions come in waves
- The natural course of an emotion is to increase, peak and return back down to baseline
- We know that humans need to experience the FULL wave of the emotion
- This is critical for long term emotional health



Understanding Emotions When Emotional Experiences are Interrupted

Generally parents fall in to **two broad categories** that interrupt the ability for the child to have a complete emotional experience

ESCAPE

PARENT:

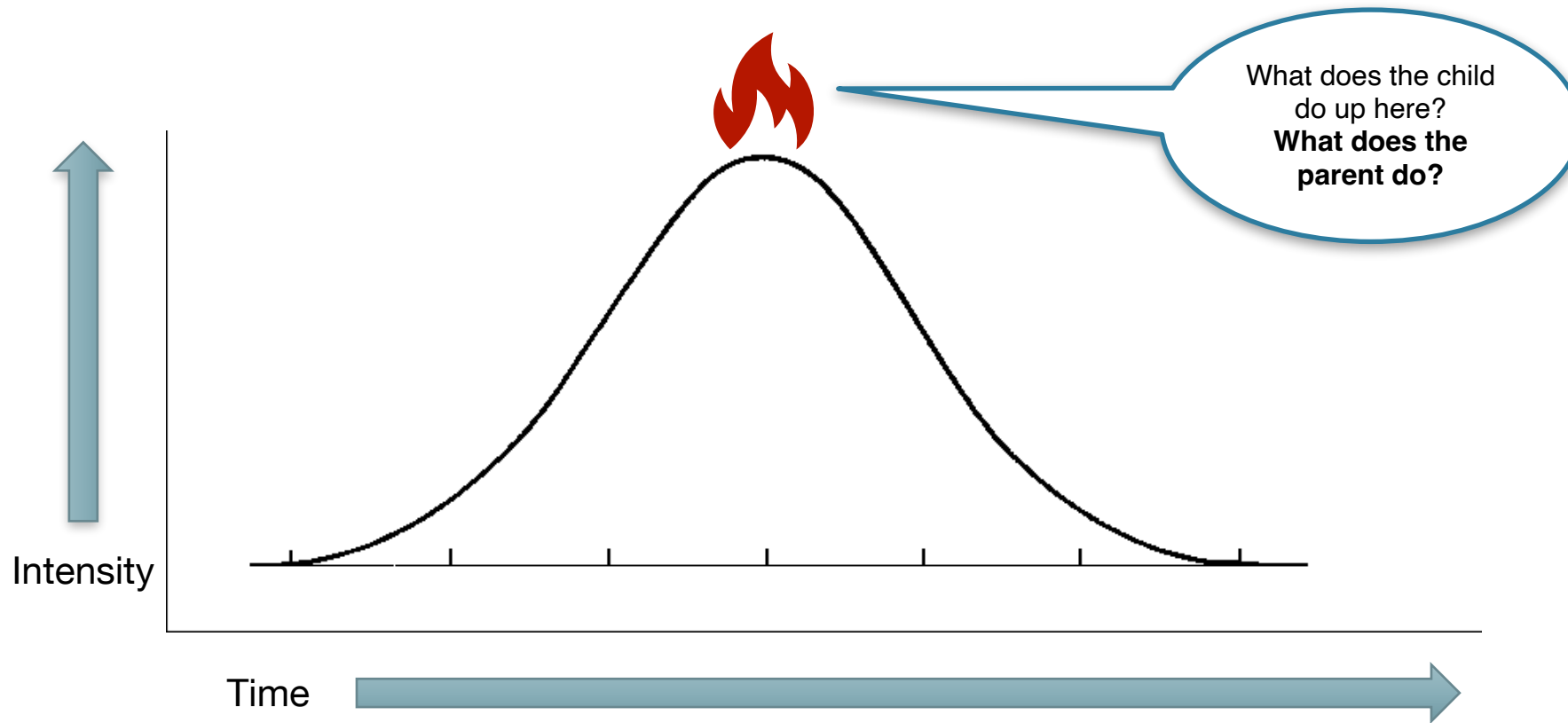
- Has difficulty tolerating child dysregulation
- Becomes anxious in the face of child distress
- Responses are motivated by a goal to end the emotion

- The Distractor
- The Nurturing Reinforcer
- The Curler

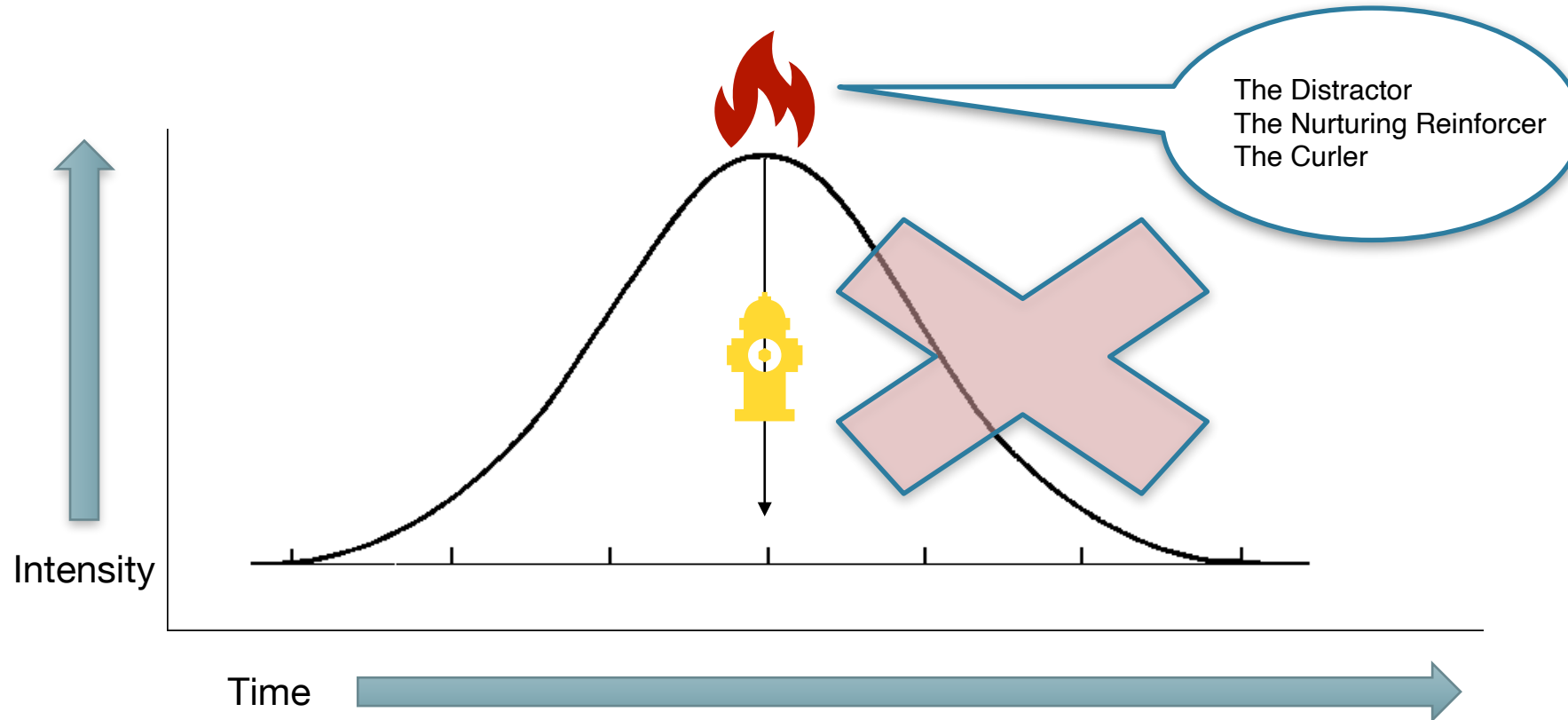


Understanding Emotions

When Emotional Experiences are Interrupted



Understanding Emotions When Emotional Experiences are Interrupted



Understanding Emotions

When Emotional Experiences are Interrupted

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CHILD:

- **Learns that their emotions are powerful**
- **Can feel out of control**
- **Can feel invalidated that parents don't believe they can handle hard feelings**
- **Does not develop the capacity to regulate emotions**
- **Distress is maintained over time**



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ESCALATION

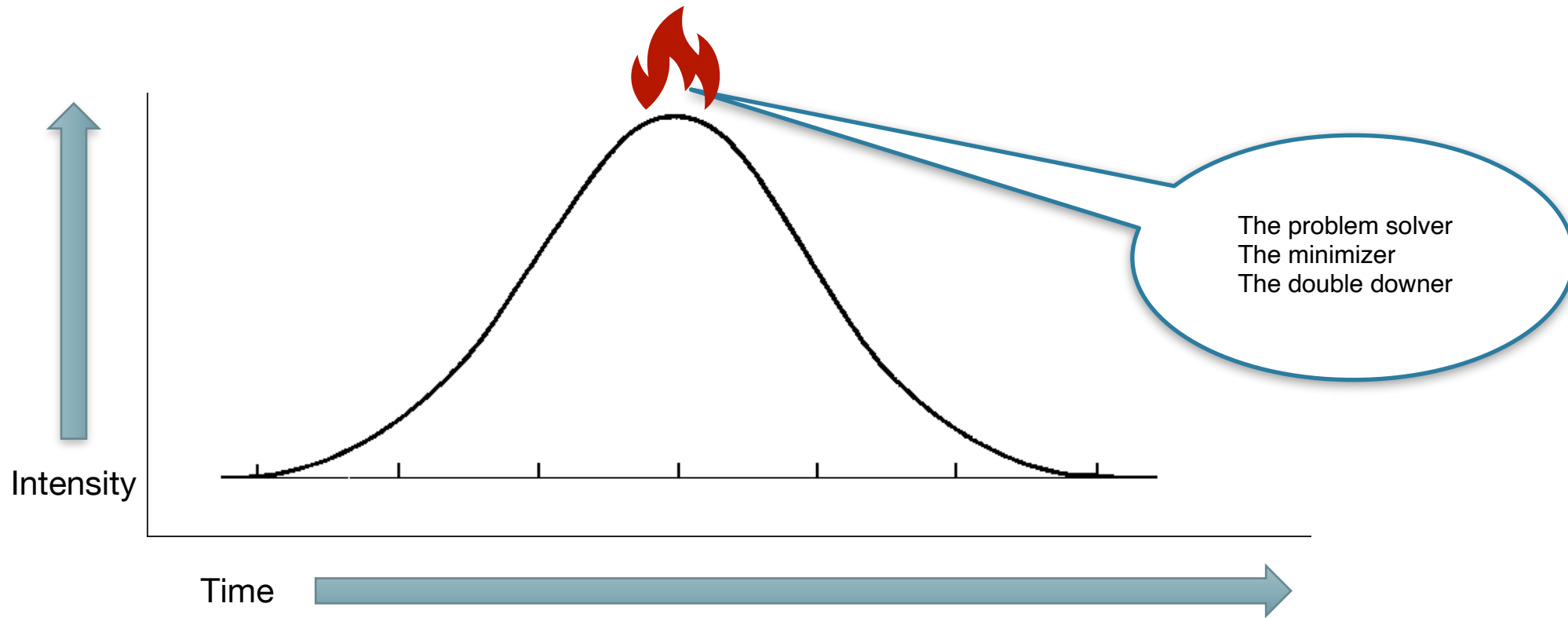
PARENT:

- Gets angry/frustrated by child dysregulation
- Feels ineffective after initial attempt to soothe don't work
- Motivated to hold boundaries, teach lessons, maintain authority

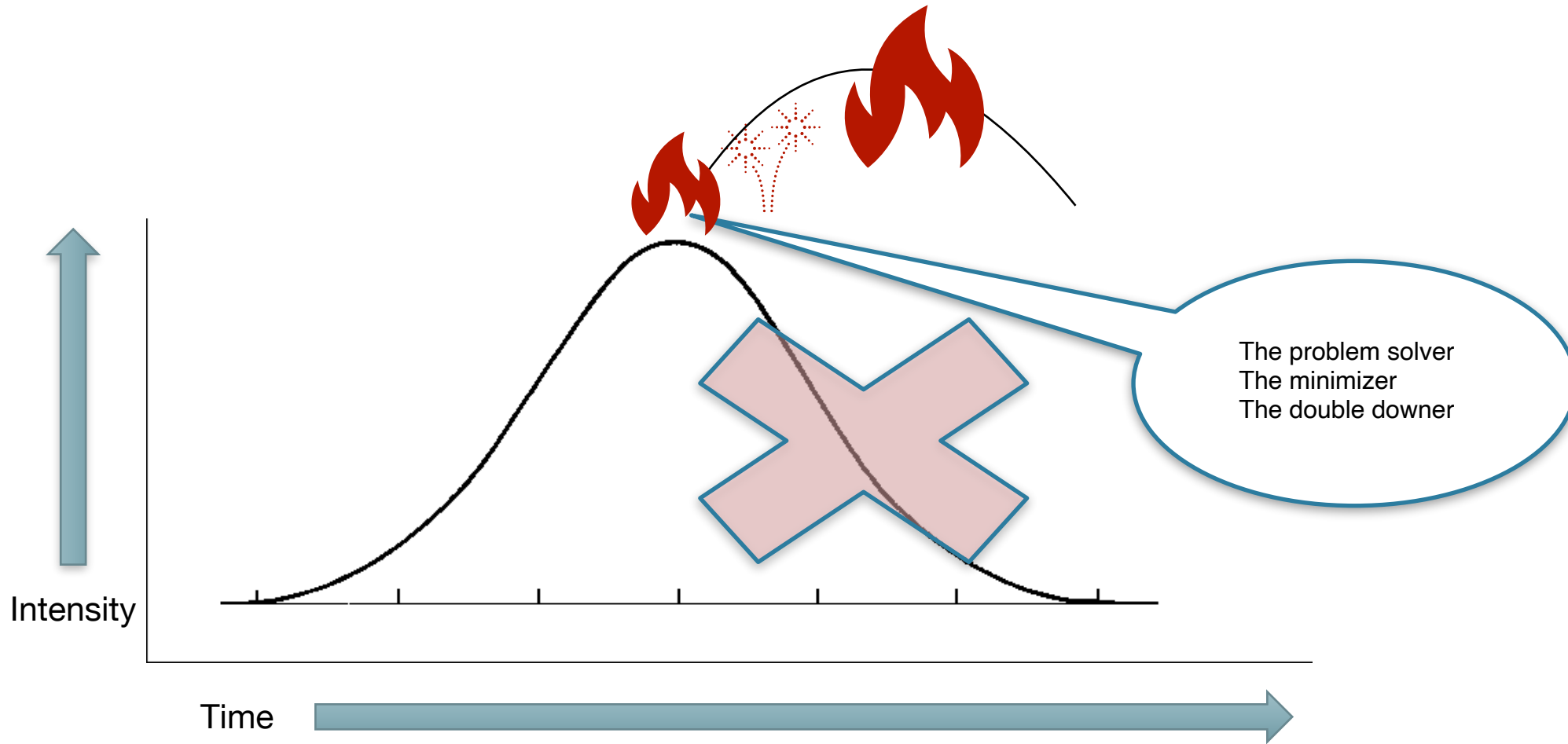
- The problem solver
- The minimizer
- The double downer

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ESCALATION

PARENT:

- Gets angry/frustrated by child dysregulation
- Feels ineffective after initial attempt to soothe don't work
- Responses are motivated to by a goal of holding boundaries, teaching lessons, maintaining authority

CHILD:

- **Feels invalidated**
- **Escalates further to be seen by parent**
- **Moves into 1) anger or 2) shame or 3) both, which can become a pattern over time**

Building Regulation: Balanced Parenting



What does *Balanced Parenting* look like?

Warm

Responsive

Supportive

Affectionate

Encouraging

Secure

Fun/Playful

Validating



Firm

Clear

Consistent

Reasonable

Intentional

Non-Punitive

Boundaried

What does *Balanced Parenting* look like?

- Research suggest that parents who can balance being warm + firm provides an optimal environment for kids to thrive
- This type of parenting style lead can lead to children who are:
 - More confident and responsible
 - Better able to self-regulate their emotions
 - More independent and able to achieve their personal goals
 - Higher levels of self-esteem
 - Improved academic performance
 - More social competence

What does *Balanced Parenting* look like?

Warm

Play
Validation



Firm

Setting Boundaries
Staying Regulated
Following Through

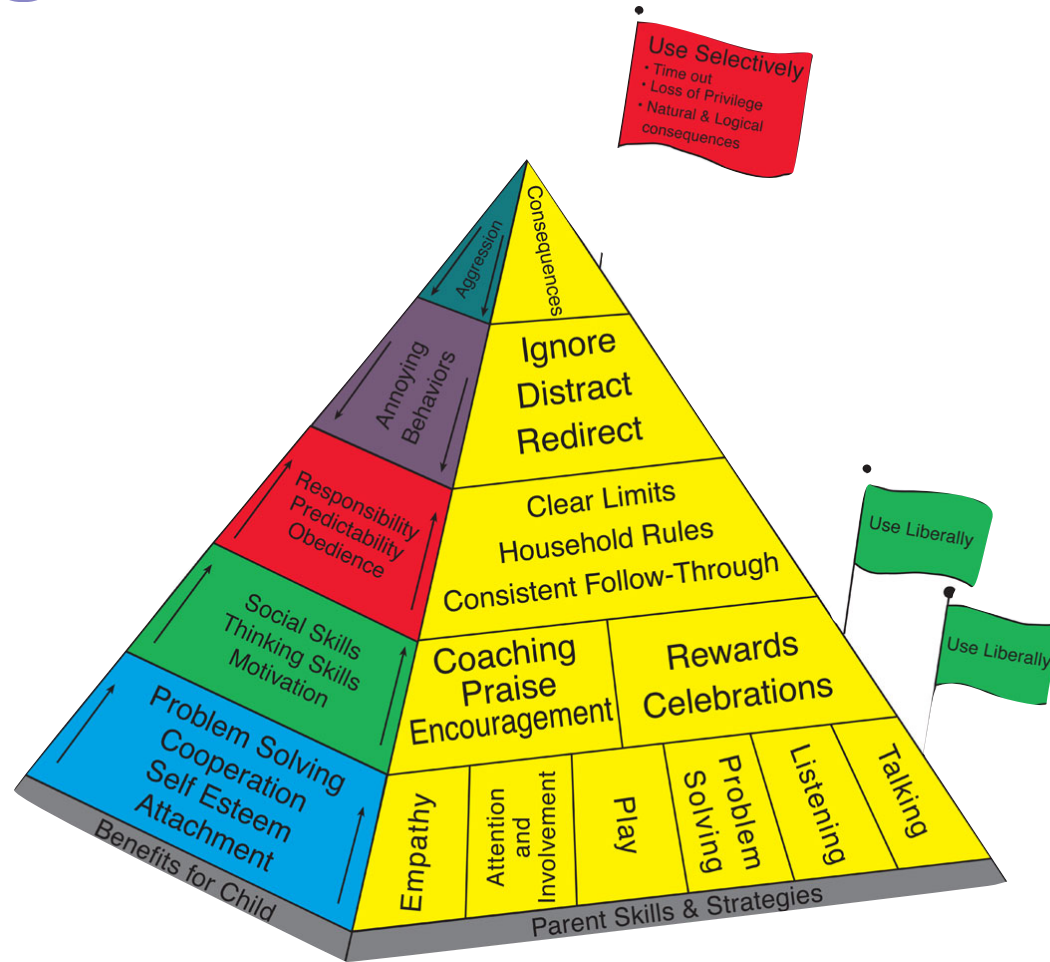
Enhancing Warmth & Connection



Enhancing Warmth & Connection with Play

- There are many barriers to connection in today's world.
- AND, the organization of the parent child relationship is parent driven- regardless of how the child shows up.
- Without a strong connection and foundation between you and your child- no other parenting strategy will be effective.
- The foundation of our relationship with a person determines HOW likely we are to want to 'do well' by that same person.
- The way that person makes us FEEL about ourselves guides our motivation, choices and behaviours.

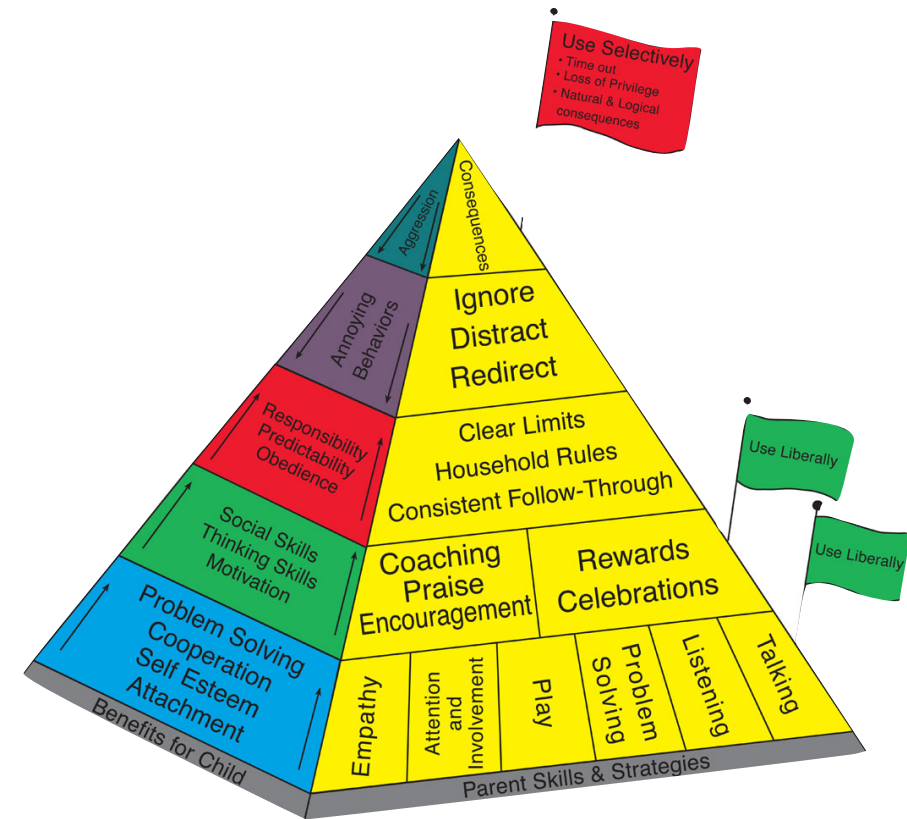
Enhancing Warmth & Connection with Play



Webster-Stratton, C. (2005).

Enhancing Warmth & Connection with Play

- Sometimes cracks develop in the foundation of the relationship. Why?
 - Parent-child fit
 - Parent stress/ child stress
 - Life!
- Parents need ways to seal up the cracks so they can implement other important parent strategies for guiding and supporting their children
- Parents need children to care about the relationship, to feel like they are good little people who make good choices
- They need to believe that a parent believes in their capacity to do so.



Webster-Stratton, C. (2005).

Enhancing Warmth & Connection with Play

- Make a point to spend 10 -15 minutes daily with your child playing somethings they enjoy
- No phones or devices present
- This is not a teachable moment- you are there to just BE with your child.
- Don't ask too many questions, just find opportunities to notice what they are doing, praise, be affectionate.
- Dosing matters- 10 minutes daily is better than 2 hours on the weekend

Enhancing Warmth with Validation

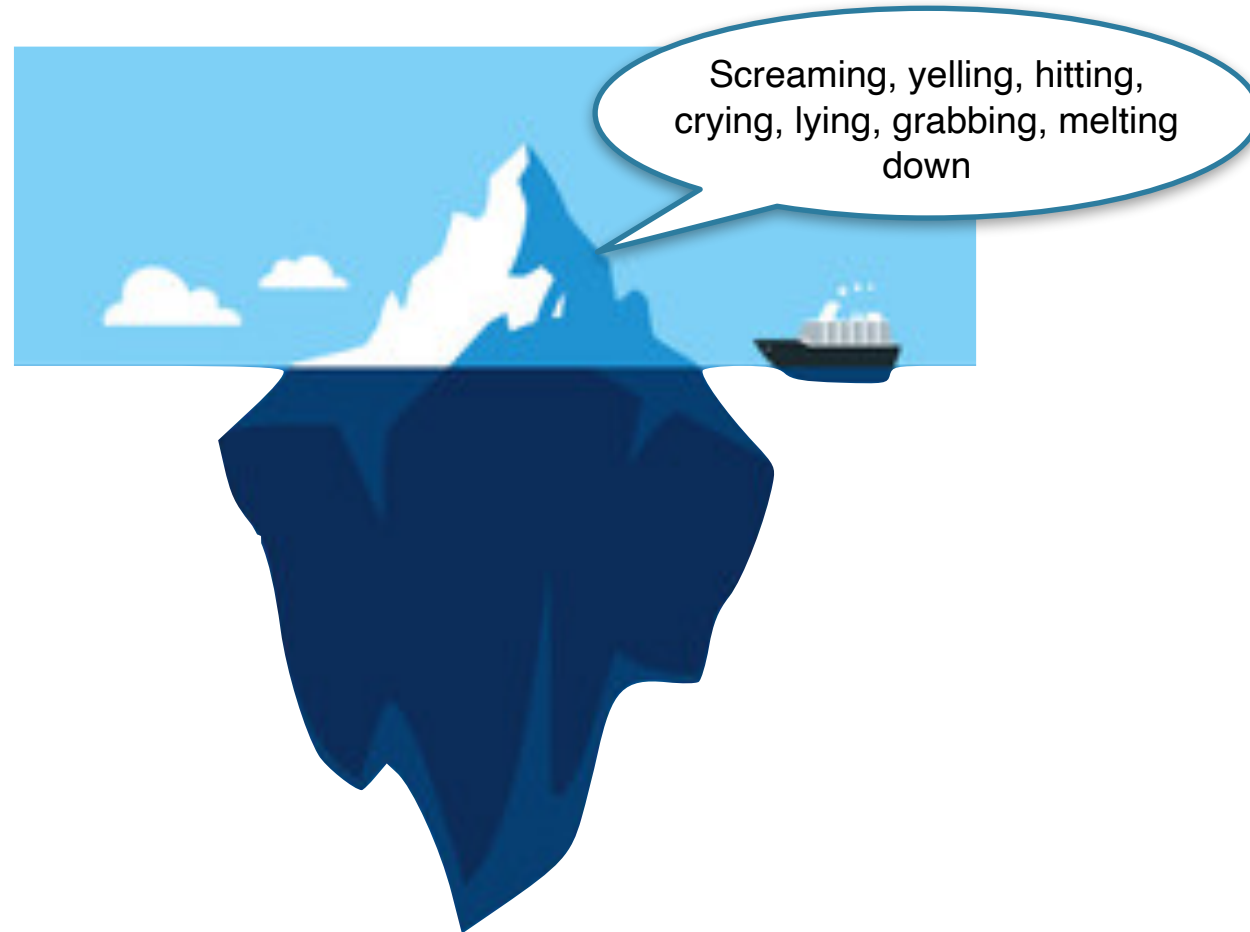
Definition: The communication of understanding and acceptance. It is a necessary step to increase the chance for children to accurately express themselves.

- All humans want one thing. To be seen, understood, and accepted. As they are. Even if “as they are” is not ideal. Seeing your child and believing them, is anchoring in their storm.
- It is the ability to separate a child’s behaviour from the feeling driving the behaviour.
- Validation is as essential to long-term emotional health and resilience, as food and sleep are to growth

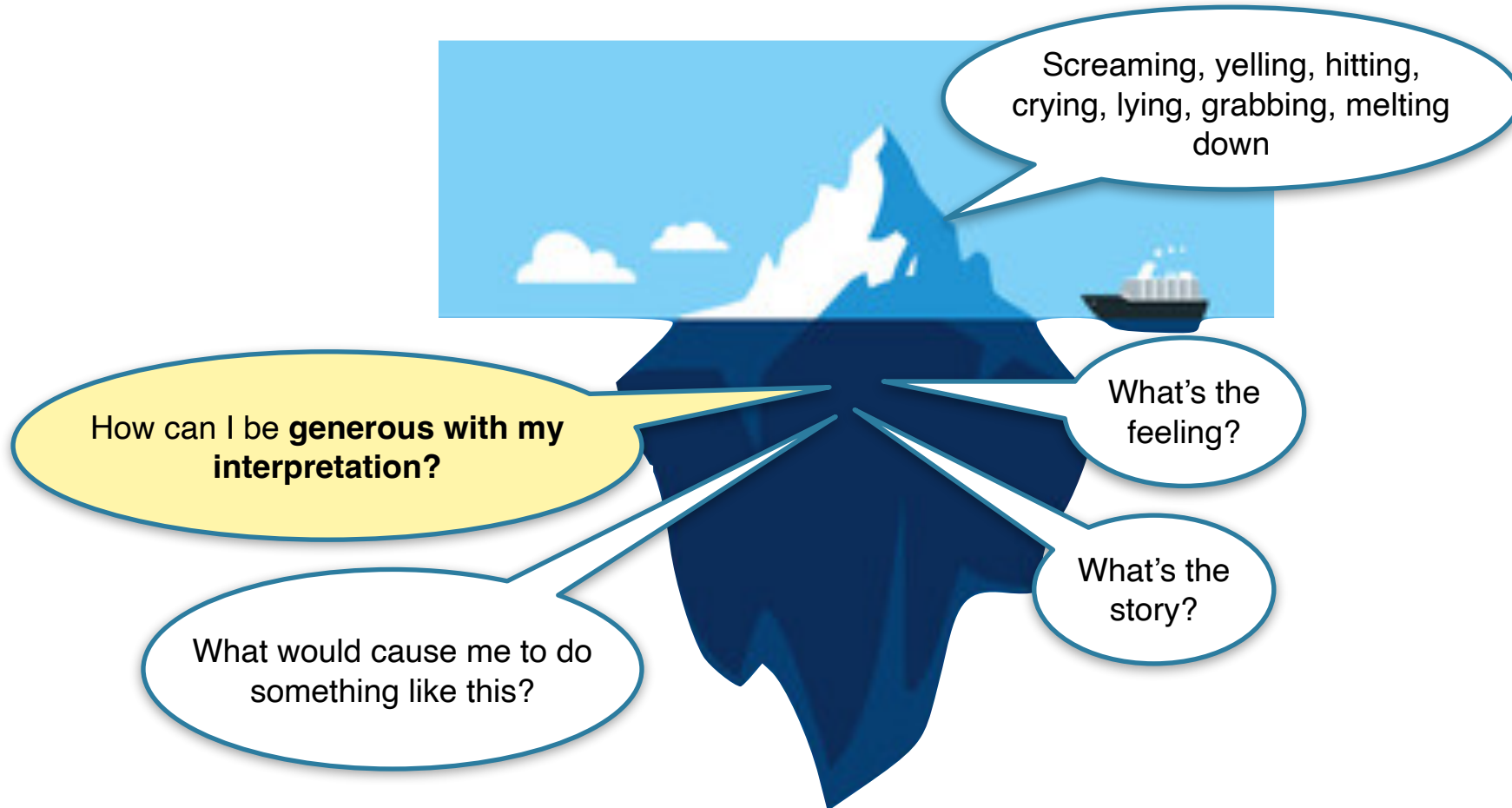
Enhancing Warmth with Validation

- All EMOTIONS are allowed, All BEHAVIOURS are not allowed
- Emotions are not the problem. It's the inability to regulate emotions that leads to problematic behaviour
- The feelings that children do not allow themselves to feel — comes out in behaviours (usually ones that we do not like!)
- EX: Feeling jealous about a sibling and not allowing it to be present, will lead to attacking behaviour.
- Behaviour tells a story - Humans do things for a reason. We need to understand what's driving it.

Enhancing Warmth with Validation



Enhancing Warmth with Validation



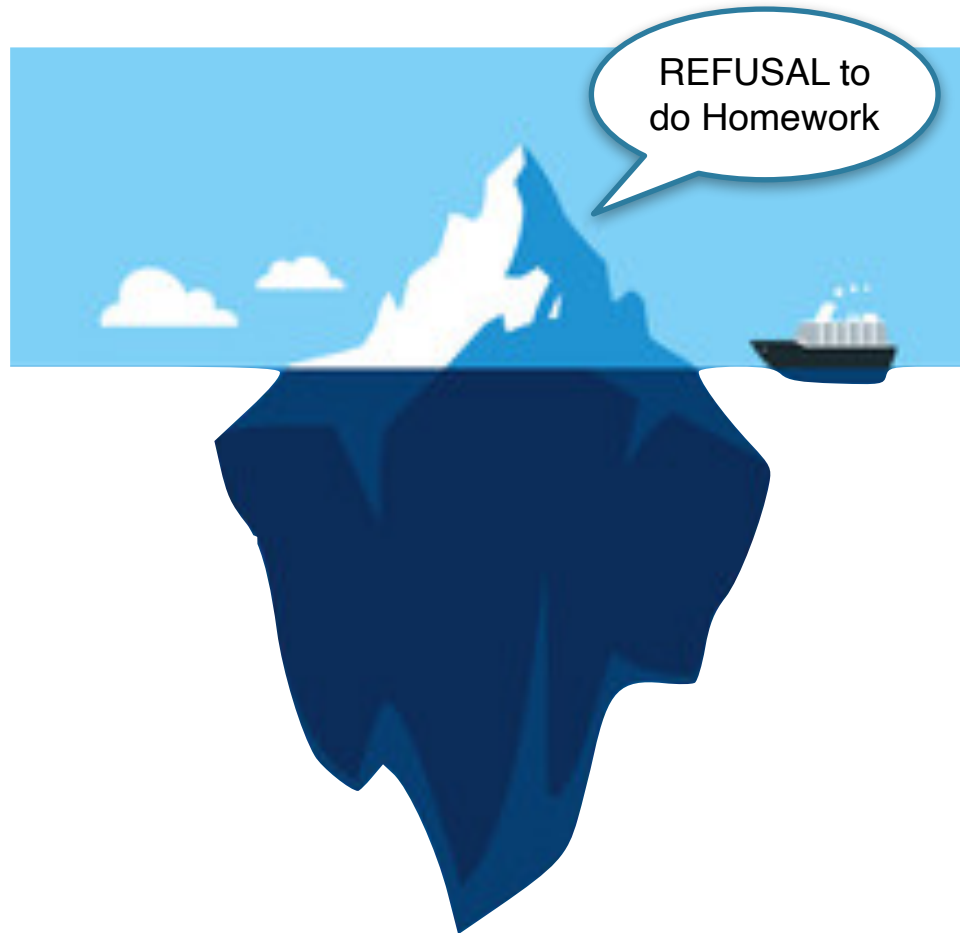
Enhancing Warmth with Validation

Oppositional

Irresponsible

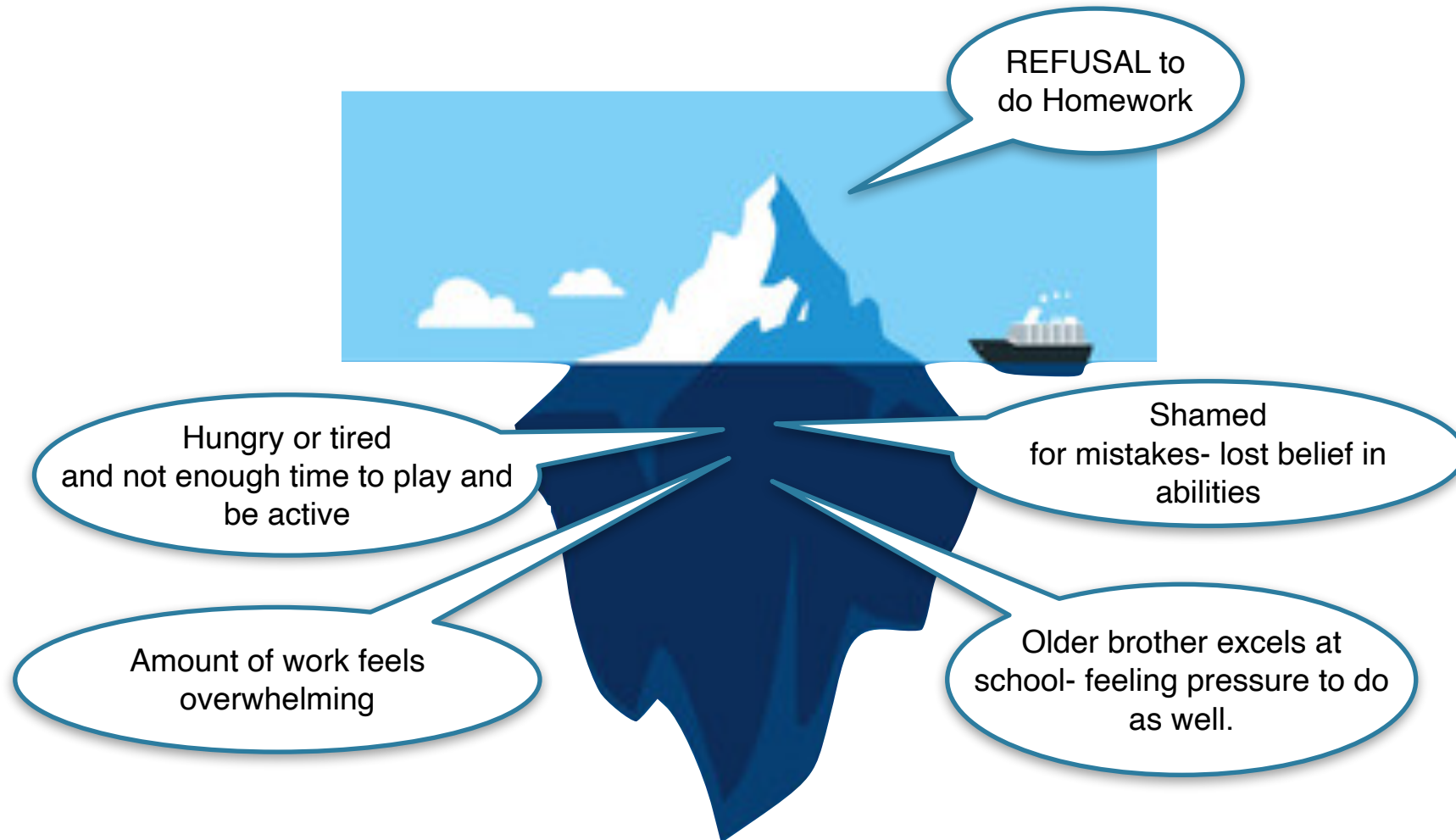
Lazy

Doesn't care about school



Siegel, D.J & Payne Bryson, T. (2015)

Enhancing Warmth with Validation



Enhancing Warmth with Validation

Validation How to:

1. Name the most likely feeling driving the behaviour

- Try to find their kernel of truth- what's under the iceberg

2. Listen to them, and reflect back

- Am I getting this right?

3. Decrease judgment- aim for acceptance- of the moment, of their feelings

4. Timing matters- problem and guide to solutions later

What does *Balanced Parenting* look like?

Warm

Play
Validation



Firm

Setting Boundaries
Staying Regulated
Following Through

Enhancing Firmness



Enhancing Firmness

- The generation of kids growing up today is desperate for boundaries
- In fact, a lack of boundaries is a key factor contributing to the poor mental health outcomes our children are experiencing today.
- What are boundaries?
 - Boundaries are determined by parents (they require nothing of children)
 - Boundaries will be crossed, broken, pushed by children - this is developmentally normal and healthy
 - Boundaries are **WHAT PARENTS DO**, not what children do
 - Boundaries do not involve consequences beyond the holding of the boundary

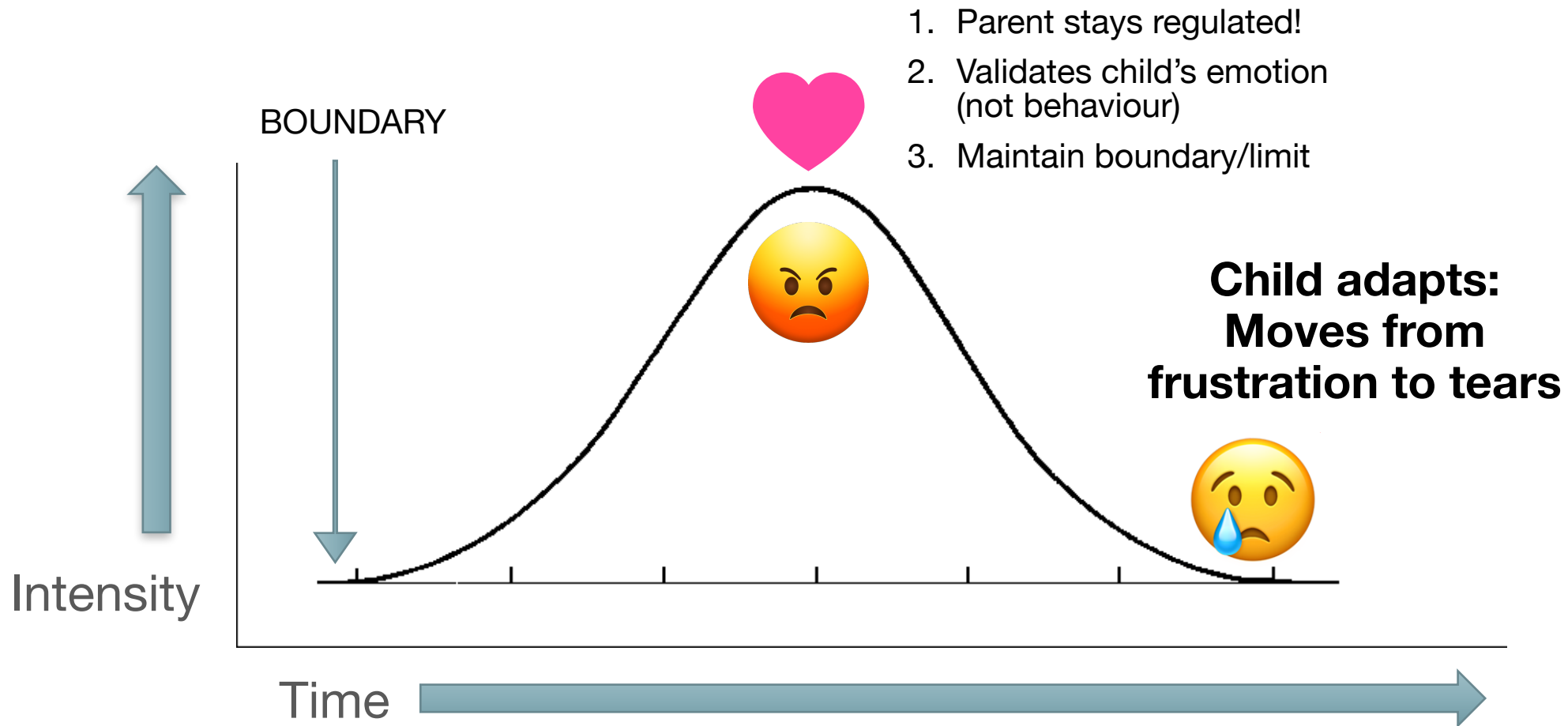
Enhancing Firmness

- Tolerating and accepting a boundary is a key developmental task for long-term healthy emotional functioning.
- Children have a lot to learn- things you can't have or do are everywhere in life
- When presented with things they cannot change, their brains register they can survive disappointment and setbacks
- They can adapt better in the long run to set backs and challenges

Enhancing Firmness

- Simply holding boundaries is not enough though- children need to adapt to this, and they need your help.
- They need to experience and accept futility- that they are up against something that won't work, and there's nothing they can do to change that.
- Adaptation = Frustration — — —> Tears
- Importance of these tears
- Boundaries, held in warmth, are the best kind

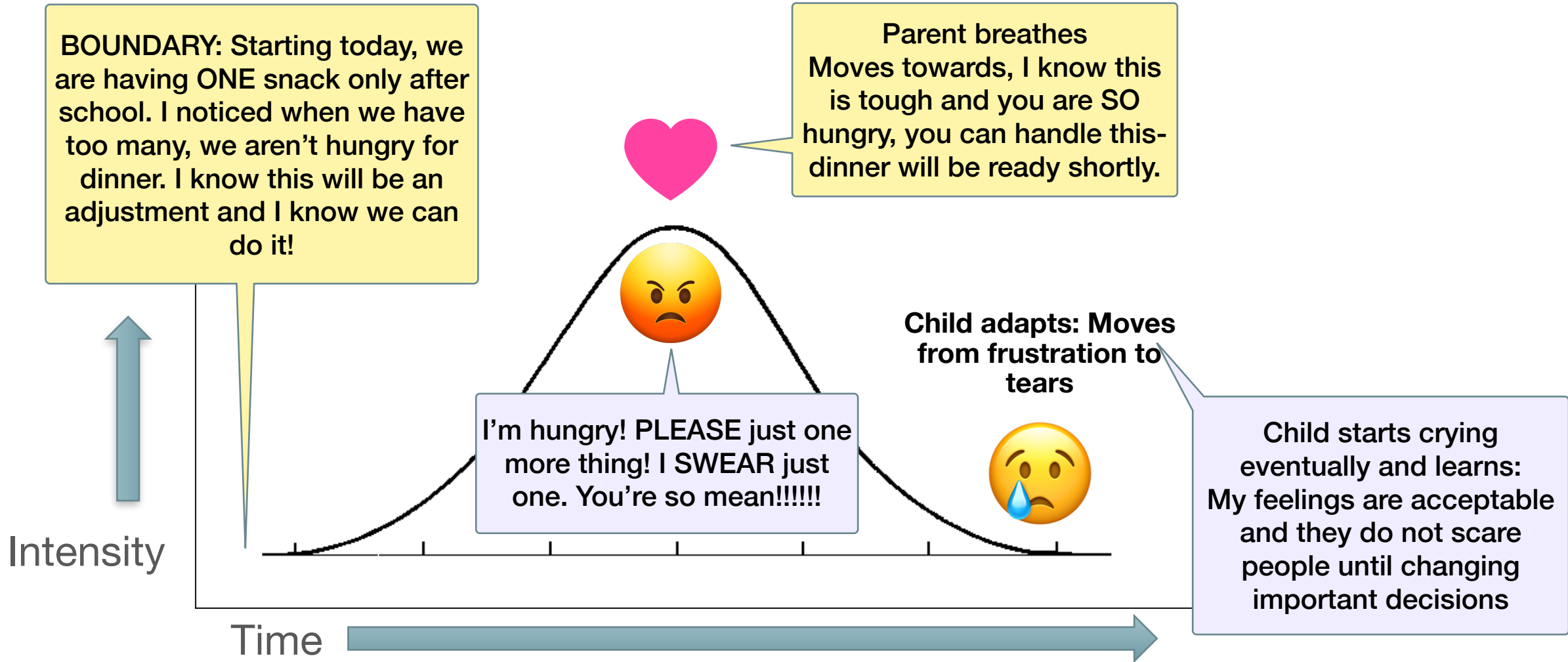
Enhancing Firmness: *Adaption to Boundaries*



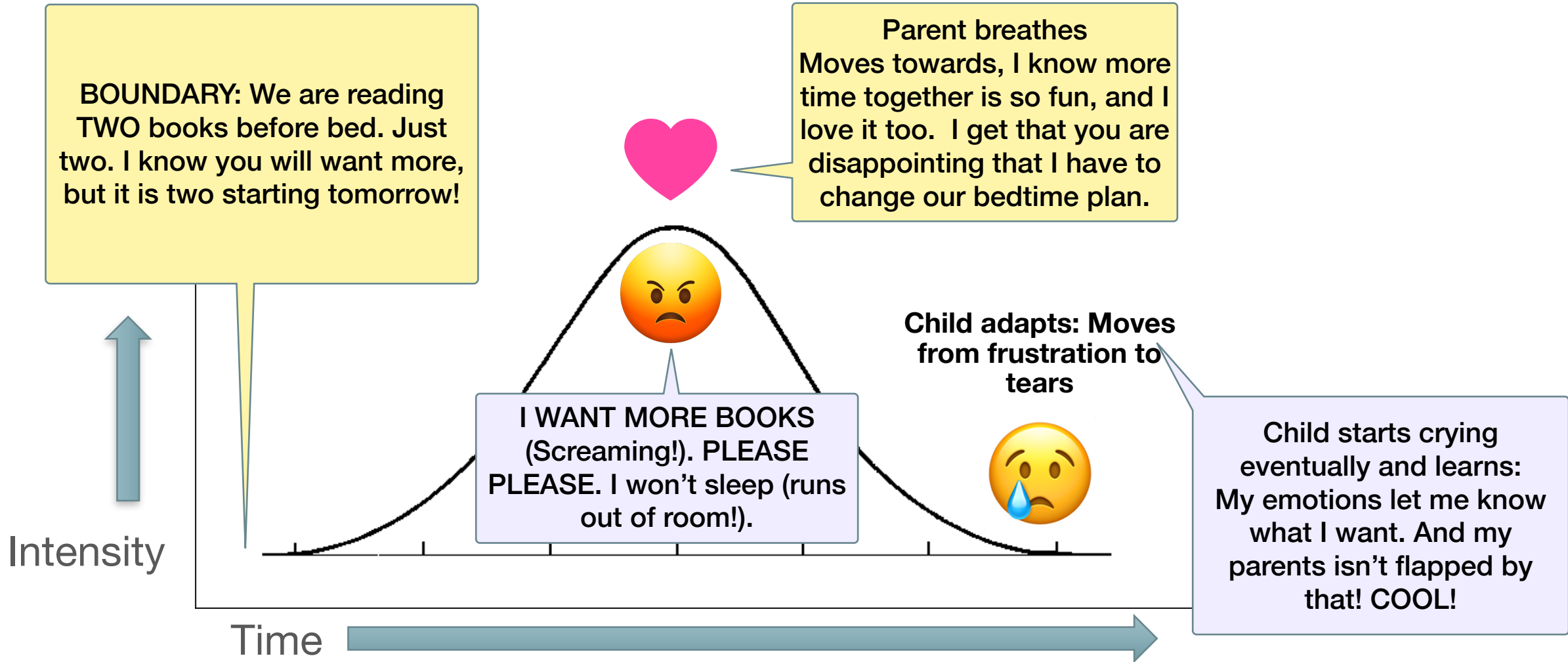
Enhancing Firmness

- Boundary setting is hard!
- Hard to stay regulated when doing it, hard to tolerate your child's protest, and hard to follow through depending on your resources.
- Pick ONE. Work through worst case scenarios
- Do not pick the hard ones to start- e.g.bedtime, screen time.
- Stay consistent
- Track it- what happens to you, what happens to them.

Enhancing Firmness: Adaption to Boundaries



Enhancing Firmness: Adaption to Boundaries



What does *Balanced Parenting* look like?

Warm

Generate good moments

See the good in them

Laugh, hug, play

Catch them being good



Firm

Decide on your non negotiable

Pick one thing to hold a boundary

Notice your urges, and breathe

THANK YOU!

For support for yourself or your child, please visit
www.ffew.ca

