

RESILIENCE & WELLBEING IN CHILDREN

WILLIAM RANSOM TALK | 28 SEPTEMBER 2022

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GRIT; GROWING
RESILIENCE
IN TEENS

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14% OF PRIMARY SCHOOL CHILDREN IN 2020 HAD A PROBABLE MENTAL HEALTH DISORDER

UP FROM 9% IN 2017

For most parents, if not all, our children's wellbeing is a priority.

Higher levels of wellbeing in children are associated with a better learning experience, more confidence in exploring the world, emotional regulation, forming relationships.

Ask any parent what they would like for their children and, more often than not, the answer is "I just want them to be happy.'

However, children are reporting lower levels of wellbeing than ever before with the recent report of Mental Health of Children and Young People 2020 showing that 14% of primary school children had a probable mental disorder (up from 9.4% in 2017).

These are worrying statistics and parents rightly want to

know how they can support their child in order to reduce the chances of mental health problems or support their child who may be going through difficulties.

Rather than focusing more on the happiness of a child at **GRIT**;, we focus more on building resilience. Resilience is associated with satisfaction, contentment, adaptability and optimism which ultimately results in increased levels of happiness.

RESILIENCE

Resilience is the human capacity to adapt quickly and successfully to stressful / traumatic events and revert back to a positive state. It is not 'bouncing back' or a 'stiff upper lip' whereby emotions are bottled up.

Developing resilience is a lifelong journey which happens as we go through the ups and downs of life. Some of us are born more resilient than others (the dandelion versus

RESILIENCE IS KEY

Resilience

The human capacity to adapt quickly and successfully to a stressful or traumatic event and revert back to a positive state

Associated with:

- satisfaction
- contentment
- adaptability
- optimism

Question of resilience over happiness

the orchid child) with dandelion people blooming no matter what the environment is like and orchid people needed a more specific environment to bloom (but they do bloom and bloom spectacularly so).

No matter the genetics though, resilience is something that is learnt and there are lots of ways in which we can support this in our children.

4 KEY COMPONENTS OF RESILIENCE

Four key components of resilience have been identified which include:

- Social competence
- Problem solving
- Autonomy
- Sense of purpose

SOCIAL COMPETENCE

This consists of the social, emotional, thinking and behaviour needed for social adaptation plus the ability to take another person's perspective

PROBLEM SOLVING

AUTONOMY

The ability to respond in line with one's own interests and values

SENSE OF PURPOSE

Your motivation and driving force behind doing what you do

4 CORNERS OF THE RING

Humans are complex beings and it is difficult to learn something as complex as resilience via a list of words.

At **GRIT**; (Growing Resilience in teens) we use boxing as a vehicle to deliver resilience coaching as we find it is a much better way for children (and adults) to visualise the concepts. It is also a great physical exercise and exercise alone is associated with better wellbeing.

By going through our concepts via “The Four Corners of the Ring” you can act as your child’s ‘coach’ to encourage them when they are facing a challenge. If your child has a specific interest or would respond better to another sport like football, tennis or dance as some examples the principles remain the same.

Feel free also to have a go at some of these exercises yourself - children learn from



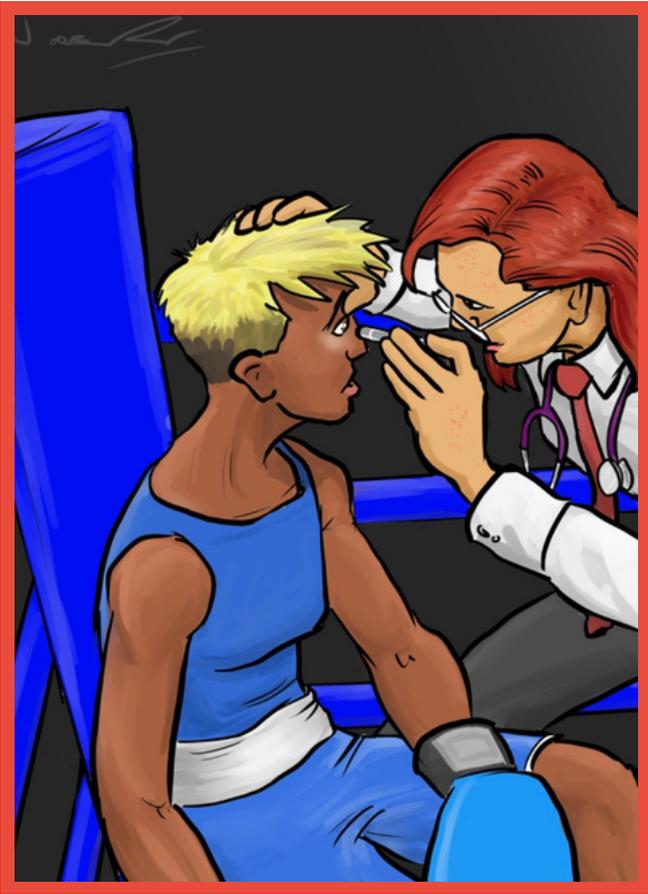
***If you don't step
in the ring, you
will never know
what you are truly
capable of***

what we do rather than what we say.

When you step into a boxing ring you step into vulnerability and uncertainty. You will be facing challenge with the possibility that things may not go your way. The only thing you can know for sure, is that if you don't step in the ring, you will never know what you are truly capable of. Therefore, it is the boxer's mindset that is key.

There are four corners to the ring, each of these has a role to ensure that the boxer can bring the best version of themselves to the ring.

CORNER 1 - THE DOCTOR



The corner the boxer stands in is their home corner. Diagonally opposite is the opposition's corner. The first corner anticlockwise is the neutral corner where the ringside doctor stands.

The role of the ringside doctor is to look after the physical needs and protect the brain. This requires an understanding of emotions and what can affect them. The more we can recognise, understand and use our emotions, the more we are

able to manage our own stress and improve our resilience. Understanding how emotions are processed is therefore important.

To keep it as simple as possible the two main 'characters' in the brain are:

1 - **AMIG**

2 - **FRONC**

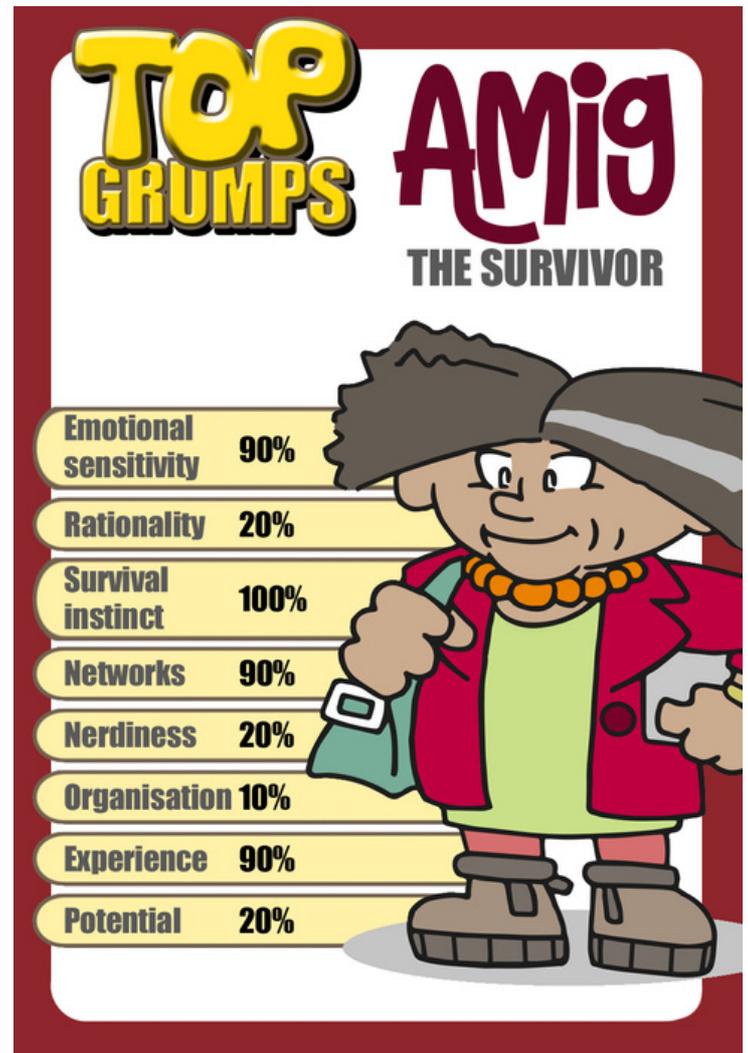


AMIG

THE SURVIVOR

AMIG – representing the amygdala, the ancient part of our brain that is responsible for the fight or flight response and essential for survival. In modern times there are now very few times when our lives are truly in danger, yet we can still experience the fight or flight response which can result in panic attacks or outbursts of uncontrollable rage.

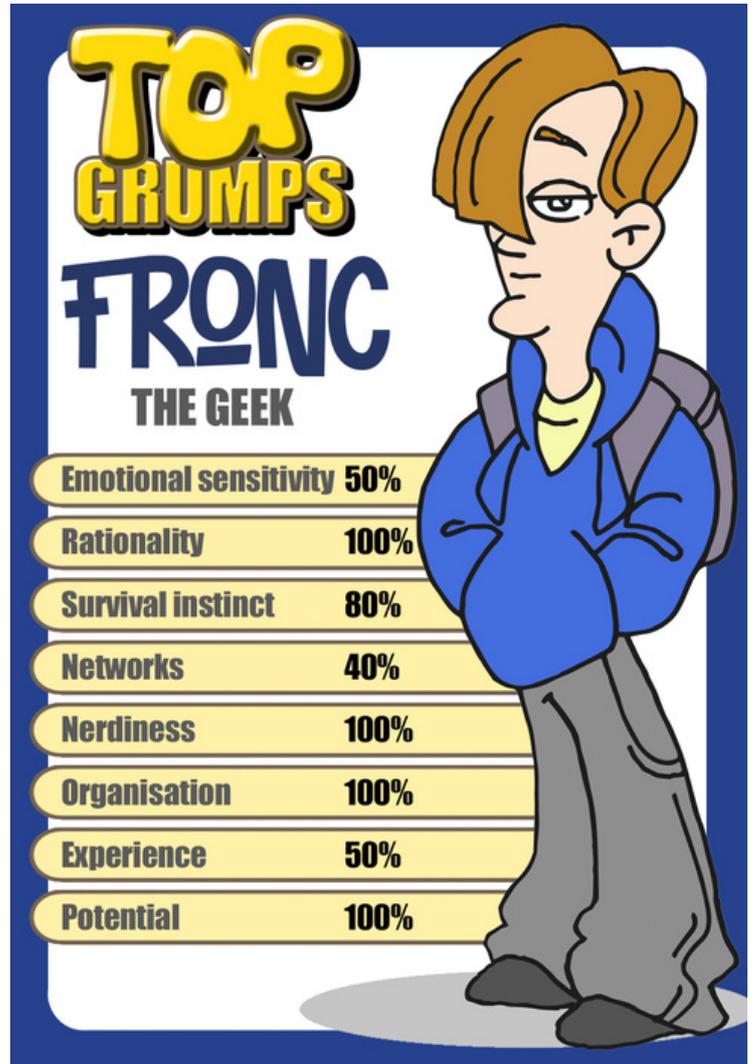
When AMIG is activated, it shuts down the logical part of the brain meaning it is difficult for someone to think rationally or even to be able to verbalise what they are feeling. AMIG is connected to the body – the heart and gut and a response from AMIG will result in a response in the body.



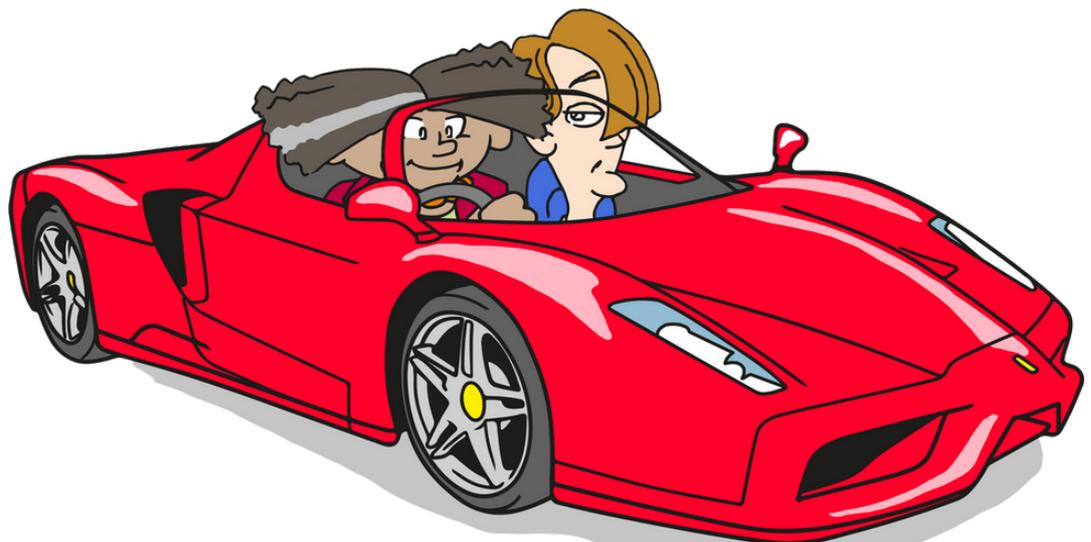
The amygdala is responsible for the fight or flight response and essential for survival

FRONC THE GEEK

This represents the frontal cortex, and this is what makes us human. **FRONC** is an over thinker and applies logic to the information they get filtered through from other parts of the brain based on previous experiences and knowledge we have picked up. **FRONC** puts the brakes on **AMIG** and can calm them down.

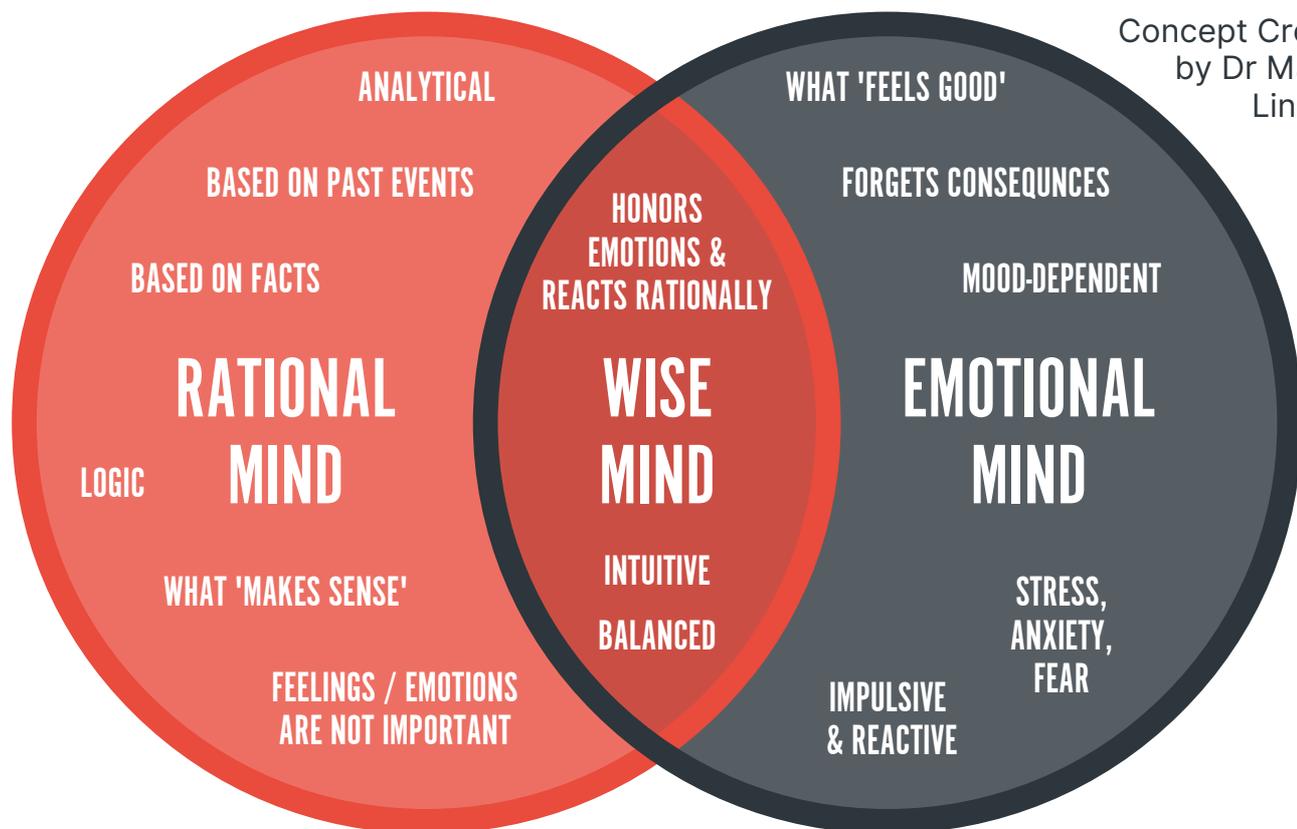


This part of the brain takes much longer to mature (mid-twenties) so as your child goes through adolescence **FRONC** lags behind **AMIG** in developmental terms resulting in effectively a brain similar to a car with a Ferrari engine and Fiat brakes which makes for a very interesting ride!!



WISE MIND

Using **FRONC** or **AMIG** on their own can result in either being out of touch with our emotions and therefore our instinct and passions or making purely emotional based choices or responses respectively. The ideal scenario is **FRONC** and **AMIG** **working in harmony** together creating the '**Wise Mind**'.



When you are in the **rational mind**, you are ruled by facts and logic.

You approach a situation, plan and make decisions based off facts. Values and feelings are secondary.

The **wise mind** refers to the wisdom within us all.

Being in this mindset involves striking a balance between reason and emotions, and acknowledging and respecting feelings.

When you are in the **emotional mind** you are ruled by your emotions, moods, thoughts and feelings.

There is a tendency to act impulsively, without thinking of the consequences.

The first step in identifying emotions is to simply check in with our child – asking them how they are. They could always use a number out of ten to rate how they are feeling. Note also that this corner is NEUTRAL and the same should be said for emotions. Emotions are neither good nor bad- they all have their uses (anxiety for example, up to a certain level enhances performance) and are simply information to the brain, NOT facts, which we can then use to choose how we are going to respond to something. Validating emotions is vital too - rather than ‘there’s nothing to be worried about’ - try – ‘I can understand why you would be worried by that – what can we do to make it feel less daunting?’

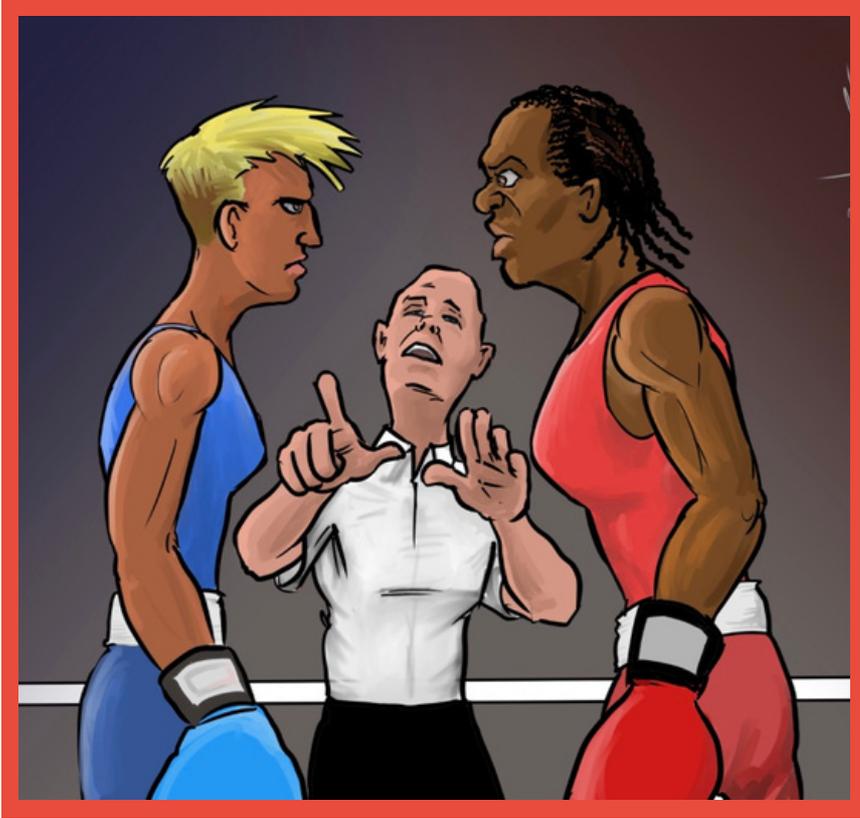
It is also worth noting how certain factors can affect our emotional state – we use the mnemonic **HALT** - if someone is feeling irritable, tired, distracted for example could they be Hungry,

Angry, Late or Tired?

Understand how our physical state can affect our wellbeing can also mean that we can use our physical state to manage our emotions. This is where introducing practices such as mindfulness (which can be as simple as doing a puzzle together), breathing exercises, regular exercise and drinking a glass of cold water to calm the nervous system when feeling anxious and overwhelmed. There is no one size fits all here – it’s a matter of experimenting and finding something that works for your child.



CORNER 2 - THE REFEREE



Boundaries are important to our wellbeing and will stop us from feeling overwhelmed or burnt out

This here refers to both boundaries and values. Boundaries are important to our wellbeing and will stop us from feeling overwhelmed or burnt out. If you would call yourself a bit of a people pleaser it is possible that boundaries are something that may be challenging to you.

The first step in forming healthy boundaries is

knowing your values and what is important to you. Our values can change over time and with different goals but knowing what is important to your child will help your child make the right choices for themselves.

An example might be a choice between attending a party that a child has been invited to which clashes with a sports fixture. In order to decide your child will need to work out what

is important like the friendship, commitment to a team and how important the match is as some examples. These choices may be different to what you would want your child to choose but it is important for your child in developing their sense of self.

This doesn't mean they can have free choice -sometimes it's a choice within a boundary such as " you can choose what you want to wear from this outfit or this outfit".

The first step in forming healthy boundaries is knowing your values

If you wanted to do your own values based exercise there are several of these available online and it's worth doing.

Values to Consider

- health
- family
- compassion
- integrity
- success
- friendship
- achievement
- honesty
- trust
- loyalty
- freedom
- duty
- security
- giving back
- fun
- adventure
- knowledge

CORNER 3 - THE CHALLENGE

“Whenever you think you can or whenever you think you can’t you’re right.”

- Henry Ford

This corner relates to our beliefs. Our beliefs are things we assume to be true but have no evidence for them. Sometimes they can be supportive (keep these beliefs) but. Sometimes they can hold us back. Phrases like “ I can’t” often have an underlying self-limiting belief and it is worth being curious about this to find out the underlying thinking pattern.

The expectations we place on ourselves and others can affect performance (have a

look at The Pygmalion effect if you are interested) and self-belief is vital.

No boxer enters the ring thinking they are going to lose.

However, the attachment we have to the outcome can cause a lot of stress and anxiety. It is not uncommon for children to have a belief that if they don’t get the desired outcome then they may be less likeable or loveable.

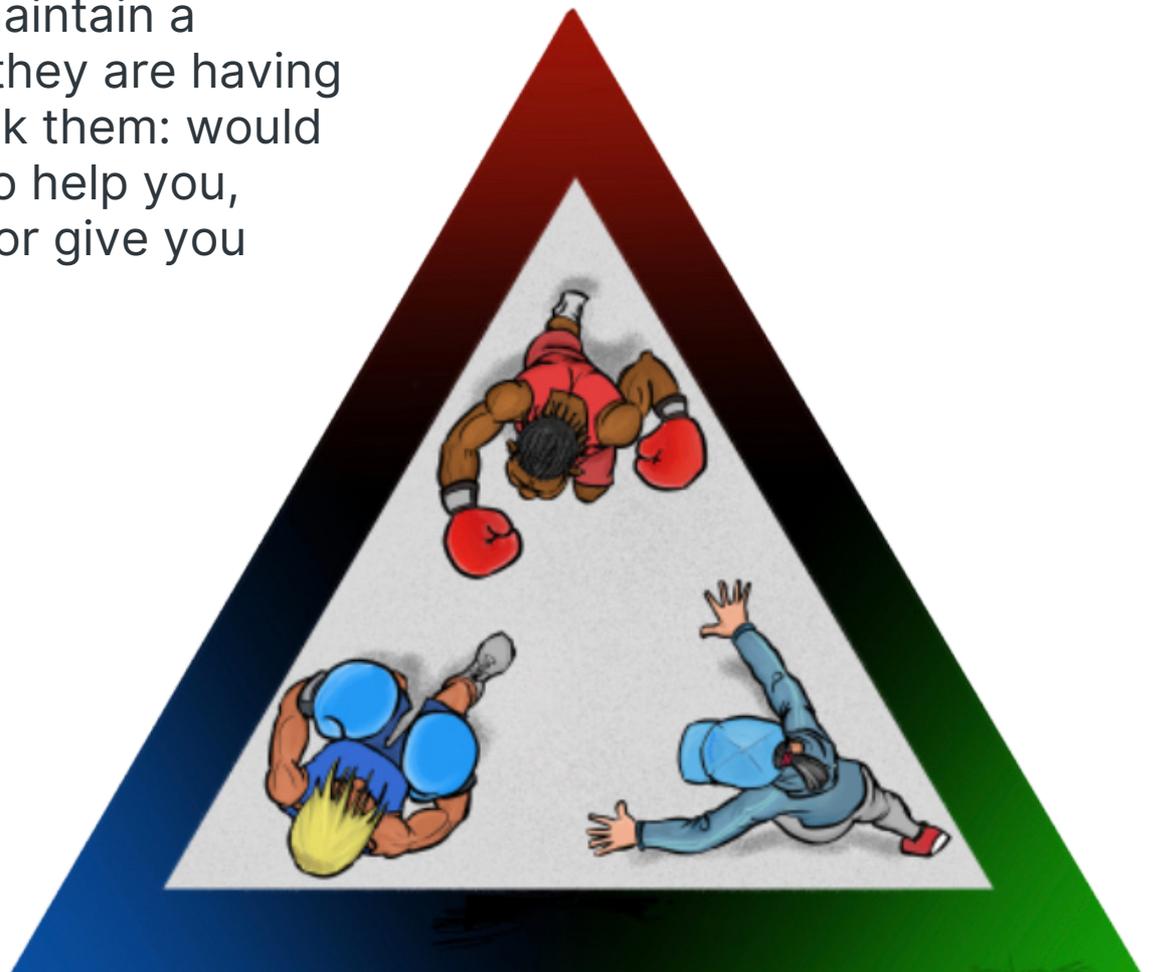
Losing or not getting a desired result, although painful, is so important for your child to understand that they are loved and valued no matter what. Resilience here is exemplified by a child recovering from disappointment to find the positives – they can have another go, they learnt an important lesson or simply they gave their best effort and they are proud of themselves for doing just that.

CORNER 4 - IN YOUR CORNER

You are in your child's corner which means you are there to empower them and encourage them to be the best version of themselves. You know your child better than anyone else and. It can be tempting sometimes to jump right in there and sort out any problems for your child. Sometimes this can result in engaging in "**The drama triangle**".

some space?" If they reply "I don't know (quite common with younger children and you will be the judge of what is appropriate responsibility to take knowing your child's temperament and developmental level you can then offer a couple of suggestions that might help so they are still making decisions for themselves.

To try and keep out of this it is useful to maintain a curiosity – if they are having difficulties ask them: would you like me to help you, listen to you or give you



The Drama Triangle

Developed by
Stephen
Karpman

THE VICTIM

The Victim's stance is "Poor me!" "I am no good for anything".

The Victim feels victimised, controlled, helpless, hopeless, powerless, ashamed, and seems unable to make decisions, solve problems, take pleasure in life, or achieve insight.

THE RESCUER

The rescuer's line is "Let me help you." "I feel better if you feel better".

The Rescuer often feels guilty if they don't go to the rescue. Yet their rescuing has negative effects: It keeps the Victim dependent on them and gives the Victim permission to fail. The rescuer doesn't do this with intent to keep the victim powerless but by not empowering the victim the victim is not learning new skills and growing in resilience.

THE PERSECUTOR

The Persecutor (a.k.a Villain) insists, "It's all your fault." "I feel better if you feel worse".

The Persecutor is controlling, blaming, critical, oppressive, angry, judgemental, rigid, and superior. Often the persecutor has a need for control, like the rescuer, but has instead learnt to control people in a negative way.

PULLING IT ALL TOGETHER -

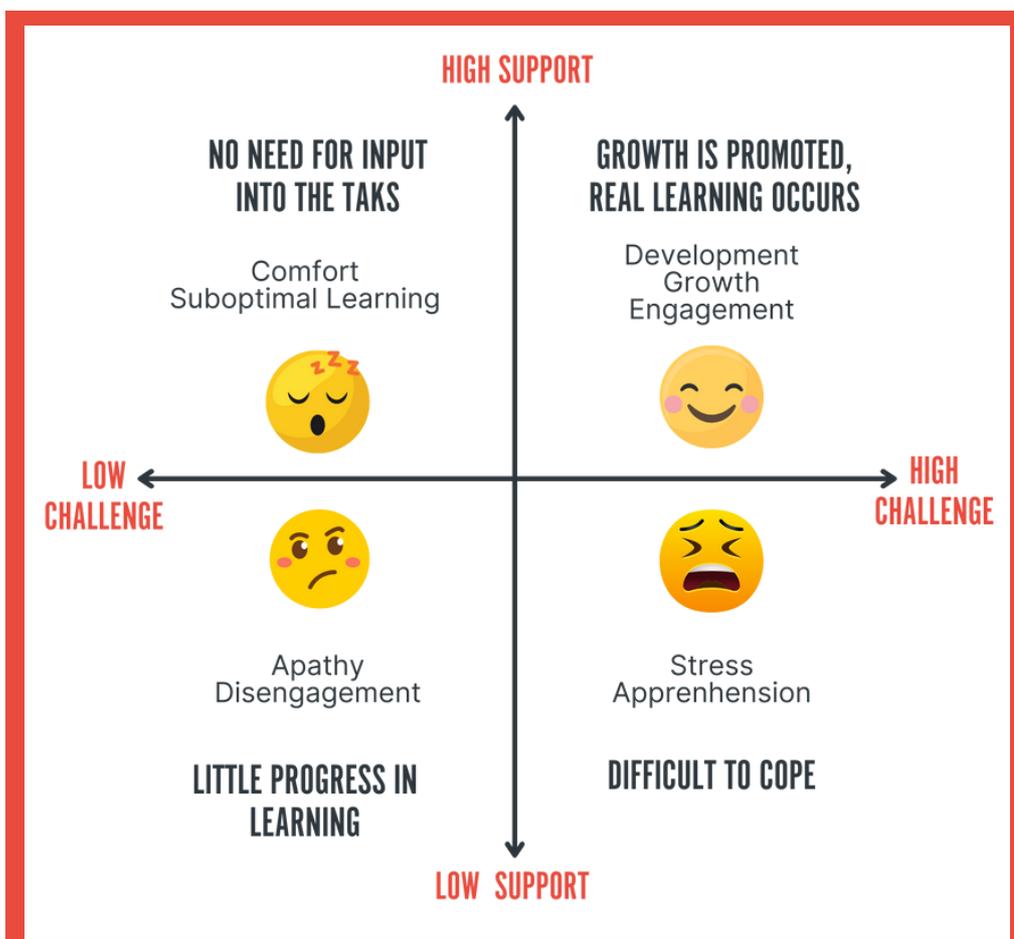
THE FIGHT

When your child does face adversity, it is hard to see, but it is important that they are able to challenge themselves to grow their resilience.

For some children this may mean smaller steps – it is important not to overwhelm a more sensitive child but equally it is important that their lives are not limited.

A very useful visual aid is the 'High Support/High Challenge' model which shows how the optimum growth and learning occurs when there is a high level of challenge accompanied by a high level of support.

When thinking of support remember the corners of the ring to the basics and that your child knows you are in their corner rooting for them all the way.



High Support / High Challenge Model

Developed by
Nevitt Sanford

WHAT IF YOU NEED MORE HELP?

First Stop:
William Ransom

School Nurse

YoungMinds
<https://www.youngminds.org.uk>

**Children's Wellbeing
Practitioner**
<https://www.hct.nhs.uk/our-services-and-referral-information/our-services-a-z/childrens-wellbeing-practitioners-service/>

Healthier Together
<https://hwehealthiertogether.nhs.uk/>

More information on GRIT;
can be found at
www.gritcharity.org