

RAW TRANSCRIPT

Caring for the Caregivers: Personal Self-Reg Strategies for Adults
With Dr. Susan Hopkins

Susan Hopkins

Hello, I'm Susan Hopkins and welcome to our third segment on Self-Reg lens of parenting. This time, we're going to be looking at caring for the caregiver, that's all of you. Right, and that contributes so much to the support the wellbeing and doing everything you can to make a difference in the life of a child and of children and youth. And if that's such an important role, it really is a contribution to our communities, our society. And, you know, we need to remember that our wellbeing matters to your wellbeing matters, too. And sometimes we can give so much that we have very little left to give. So, we're going to explore it, we're going to explore a little bit of personal Self-Reg, we're going to build a little bit of a profile, you'll have an opportunity to start mapping out yours just a bit as we go. So, if that interests you grab a pencil and a piece of paper or your computer or just be prepared to do a little bit of reflection as we kind of think about what this means for us. But we know that that the wellbeing of young people is connected to the wellbeing of the adults in their lives. And these are children and youth who've been through more stress than children who are still you know, are living in their homes, the same home that they've lived in their whole life, you know, and it is just to recognize that that huge contribution that you are making in your roles, and the difference making make no doubt about it, you're making a difference is also can in turn take its toll on us. And so I want you to recognize that, yeah, just how important that is and how valuable you are, and how much you deserve to really, you know, take a few moments and, and think about how to put yourself first, for some of you that will be very hard to think about because it seems selfish, you know, many of you have been givers your whole life, and finding all sorts of ways to give, give, give, give, and help the ones that you know, carry the load for everyone else. And so, it feels awkward or uncomfortable to think about putting ourselves first.

Susan Hopkins

But the truth is, it's not selfish, it's the most generous thing you can do. It is the most generous thing that you can do for the people that you care about. Because again, if that cup is empty, there's nothing to pour. So, you fill that cup up a little bit. And so that's what we're going to be thinking of today. All right, so let's get started. I want you to consider this, you know, we thought about this with children and youth. But this applies to us as well. It's about the science of resilience. And so, the idea of resilience is not just a concept, it can be looked at in different ways it can be looked at through this like psychological lens, which is, you know, rising up to the challenge and overcoming, you know, it's often thought of as one idea of resilience that can be looked at through a social lens.

Susan Hopkins

So, we can think about as a community and an ecosystem that are all connected to one another. And thinking of the resources and the supports available to us and navigating our way towards those of us have a social lens. So, it's connected in relationships and in contexts, and we can think of it in a biological understanding of resilience as well. And so that is physiological

Grounding living and learning in self-regulation

changes that are happening in your brain and body. And that we have these restorative mechanisms that are intended to help us rebound in a way or help us recover from moments of stress. But it's not just something that happens once it's we're in and out and in and out of these of these phases of stress and then recovery. And what happens for folks under excessive stress. And that can take all sorts of different forms is that it's almost like a spring, you can imagine it's been pulled so tight, pull, pull, pull, pull, and then when you let go, it doesn't quite go back to its original baseline to its original form. And it's a way of thinking about it like that, but there are physiological mechanisms.

Susan Hopkins

You know, and in that, there were talking vagal tone is actually the physiological mechanism that's involved there. But just important to realize that this has three elements. It has a psychological you know, what we decided to think and plan and how we how we view it, how we talk about it, you know, how we, how we deal with the stress, it has the socio social lens of it of the community and the people around us in those relationships. And it also it also has this biological, you know, something that's going on inside us. So, I want you to consider that if you have been in a state of continual stress and you know, sometimes it can be going on in the background. And we realize that, you know, it was stressed, we knew all along that we're dealing with a lot of stress, I always dealing with a lot. But there are just moments where all of a sudden, I will bottom out energy wise and just depleted, I got nothing left. And it feels like it comes out of nowhere. But it doesn't, it doesn't know we're going to think about that a little bit today. It has been building and I just missed the signs, or I pushed through the signs because I was taking care of everyone else. And so, can you reset that? Yeah, of course you can. And that's what we're going to think about today.

Susan Hopkins

So, I would like you to have a look. And I hope you've grabbed something to scribble some notes on or you know, it can be your computer. If you're there with someone else you can, you can talk about this, that's absolutely fine. But I want you to have a look on this list. These are some 21st century stressors, okay, and we're filming this in a specific context, and time and you're living in it in a certain context and time, you know, you may be watching these six months after I filmed it. And so, realities change and things that are going on for us as a society, for your community, for your family, they all change. So, I want you to consider what is draining, what are the stressors that are zapping your energy. So, what's in your backpack, have a look at this list, and see if you can think of even like three that jumped out to you right away as being big time energies that burst for you. Okay, I'm going to give you a moment I'm going to pause for and wait. And just let you have a look through and think about three, you can write them down, you can tell them to somebody.

Susan Hopkins

So, there's no right or wrong. And many of you could have come up with lists of 10. Right, but we're thinking of these sorts of broad areas of things that can be really, really zapping it at particular times, a lack of for poor quality sleep, school stress, but maybe it's the phone calls you're getting from the school that are continual, or maybe you're studying something yourself, you know, a sense of feeling all alone, that can be a huge stressor on any of us. So, have a look

Grounding living and learning in self-regulation

and just sort of begin to think about which one of these, which one of these come jumps out at you as something that you might be able to work on a little bit.

Susan Hopkins

Okay, so you've thought about what three areas are. And you can certainly take this in any direction you like. But you're recognizing that these are energy zappers for you. Now, I want you to consider what is one that you could dial down the tension for yourself just a little bit. And if you're not sure, choose one that you would like to work on. Okay, so I'm going to keep going. And I want to think about as we're thinking about our own wellbeing, we're remembering that the Self-Reg has five domains, it has the biological one, I like to use the symbol. Right? And so that can be anything from allergies to issues, things related to the weather or the temperature or even the season. You know, are there certain seasons that that are more challenging or certain that are better for you. It can be things like pain, I've had terrible headaches for months now. And so, the pain is it is a stressor, and it does add some of my energy. I'm 52 so my things have changed for me, you know, going through menopause and, and I'm sorry if that makes anyone feel uncomfortable, but I am, and it is actually it's added all kinds of new stressors and things for me. There are challenges and the reality is that those become energy zappers, especially as you know, waking apart at night, interrupts my sleep and so all of a sudden you see this pattern happening in energy zappers, now I want you to think of emotion are their stressors, really strong emotions, you know which ones the symbol is this, which ones come to mind for you as being really intense and intense. Think about that word, intense, intention. It's very, very strong and that even when they're positive, they can be real energy zappers for you. Cognitive I think a big tax time is always one that comes right to mind but to do lists, realizing people are waiting for me trying to process You know, certain kind of information that is kind of meaningless to me or I'm hearing somebody go blah, blah, blah, and it's just going not going in. And yet I'm trying to pay attention, but it's just not standing. So certain things like when I tried to learn another language for the first time, I really felt that I remember being a grade 10 student, and really struggling, I've been pretty school have come easy to me. And then all of a sudden, I got to grade 10 math, and I couldn't understand it. And I was going through all sorts of things as a teenager, and getting in all kinds of trouble and, and it just couldn't stick. And I started, you know, thinking that I wasn't very smart. And a really had nothing to do with intelligence, it had to do with limbic breaking. So, there were times that my brain was gone. Right, your brain does that too. It shuts down the thinking part of the brain because it's trying to conserve energy, conserve glucose, and it just becomes too much.

Susan Hopkins

So social stressors, right? So, I shared with you, or in an earlier video, that the social domain, it actually is one that I really look for, it's a sign of how balanced I'm feeling. Because if I feel like socializing, a lot, it usually is a sign that I am in a pretty good space. I love being in my work around other people, I love being with kids, I love being with family, I never miss sort of important events and things like that. But if I have my choice, I tend to prefer a little solitude to a big group of people. And yet thinking through the COVID times, I'm really missing and missing, engaging with others. And being in the same room. I would rather be with you right now is a really interesting example in pro social stress. Taking on the stress of others watching the news and worried about people on the other side of the world, or hearing stories, I mean, this would be a strong one for many of you, when a young person is with you. And you know how many of

Grounding living and learning in self-regulation

you have had situations where you would have liked to have kept that child longer than you had that child. And there's all sorts of reasons that that changed. Oh, you know, it's like an agony almost, it feels like and it's just really interesting to think about that ache, or worrying about a child or you know, someone, maybe someone has to go and start a new day at a new school, and it's their third school this year. And you know, your heart just aches for them, that those are pro social stressors, we're taking on the stress of others sense of injustice as another one, really feeling that there's a mistreatment, or that that a child's not getting a fair shake, and then doing everything you can to advocate for it really important that you do that. And advocating is an important one. And yet, here we are back at realizing Okay, it's also taking its toll on her energy reserves.

Susan Hopkins

So, I just wanted to share this one example, so that you had something kind of concrete to think about in terms of from a science perspective. So I talked in the last one about super stimulants I and you may have wondered what they were this is what they are, you know, they're things like junk food or sugar, lots of sugar, video games can be this social media screens can cause super stimulant response, their actions we do that result in real changes in our, in our brain, it impacts our brain in ways that makes us feel better for a little while. And when you look on this list, no wonder it's triggering the release of opioids, our brain and body's like a pharmacy. It's like a pharmacy. And, and it releases what the various neuro chemicals that it that it thinks it needs to it's always trying to keep them balanced and balanced and respond and respond. So, you wouldn't feel better for a little while, you know, when I eat a big, you know, jug of ice cream, you know, there's a sedating effect that I have, and a numbing that feels really good. And then, you know, feeling better for a few minutes. And then you feel worse, right? So, it's really recognizing that that it's having these impacts on you overstressed folks over stress, people tend to be drawn to Super stimulants, making you feel better, and making you feel better for a little bit, and then you feel worse. So, it's a really interesting one to think about. Because we can get stuck in this cycle and remembering that it is operating on our system. And it's not as easy as saying, I'm never going to eat ice cream again, or do whatever, you know, your super stimulant is of choice is because then we're practicing willpower. We're trying to say I'm not going to do this. Now we're going to do this and that'll be all fine until you reach too much stress. And you'll you know your head right back for your thing of ice cream or my salt and vinegar chips or whatever it is for you. And then we can feel worse and then we will feel hard on ourselves. And so, there are stressors in all of the domains. It's beginning to understand that okay, what is this doing for me?

Susan Hopkins

What is it serving if you google any area, if you google, I mentioned salt and vinegar chips, if you Google and have a look at what would chips do for you. You know, they were actually intentionally designed to have a certain crunch, a certain sugar and salt, a certain flavor, a certain smell, there's certain crinkly sounds of the bag. All of those things are, are cueing in my brain an urge, right? I want one. And so, it's really just sort of beginning to think about why. Why was I so if you go and eat the chips, or the or the ice cream or whatever, it's, why was I drawn to that? Okay, what did I need? Maybe I could figure it out a little bit more upstream. So that I didn't reach that point. And it takes time. But the most important thing here is beginning to see it differently and realizing it's like your brain, a body or a car and you're trying to think about, you

Grounding living and learning in self-regulation

know, what does it need for fuel? What does it need for gas, what are the things that you know, that I need to keep myself running and in the best state and possible, so the excess stress, remember, it impacts your resilience, it impacts the young people in your life, resilience, it impacts your resilience, too. And resilience is situated, it's a moment in a context. And we may be very resilient in one situation, and not at all in another.

Susan Hopkins

You all know, young people that have come have lived, you know, a good portion of their lives and care, that are these incredible role models for others and have gone on to do the most amazing things have demonstrated resilience, have demonstrated resilience, and then some inner actually the sources of knowledge and expertise that people like me are trying to learn from. And, you know, we begin to think about what put that package, you know, what were the things at the root level, that supported that, Chuck, as it is, you know, that within a young person, that's been there, their journey, and it's ours to sit back and on. And it's also ours to think and learn from what might have contributed what might have made a difference. And remembering that even as we're navigating excessive stress, right? That we can still be demonstrating resilience. And I will argue that every time in every one of the individuals lives that we were looking up to or learning from in any in all sorts of ways. There are key relationships, there were key moments along the journey. A key people that, you know, framed how I see myself as a child is that as a youth, you know, my understandings of how to make sense of my behaviors and things that don't make sense how to see myself with those soft eyes, how to recognize in, you know, opportunities, and believe in them and know that, that I can rise to that. All of this is, is connected to Self-Reg, whether you have that language or not. So, we recognize that stress is in all five domains, and we recognize it in others, and we recognize it in ourselves, we know that we shift from the learning brain to this subcortical survival brain, we recognize it in young people, we recognize it in ourselves, right? There are moments you're going to switch to survival brain, and you know, you will not be the golden example of parenting in that particular moment, because you can't be because your brain is in a survival state. But recognizing that shift is really important, you know, and that, that understanding that what we're trying to get away from is chronic limbic brain arousal.

Susan Hopkins

So, if we think about those young people that are, many of them are involved in this in this in this project in the take five project and leading it in all sorts of ways. You know, what were the moments, you know, those moments when everything sort of aligned and came together? What were the moments that that shifted that pivoted who what were the relationships that made a difference? What were those contexts when the tension was good dial down just enough, right? And, and it's just such an important way to think about it.

Susan Hopkins

So, I also want you to remember that the stress cycle, so this is not a good any single stress. So, it is not just because you didn't sleep or because somebody didn't pay the bills, or somebody didn't show up or you know, or you didn't eat the right breakfast or its stressors in all five domains, and they ping off one another. So right now, you might be dealing with biological stress, maybe you're experiencing some seasonal allergies or dealing with a flu. Or maybe you are, you know, you suffer, I don't know Eczema and it's uncomfortable or asthma is making it

Grounding living and learning in self-regulation

sort of challenging for you to breathe. And you know it's or sometimes you're having asthma attacks and that's affecting the quality of your life, but you might also be not drinking enough water and you know, putting do much sugar in your body, which is hard on your body, right? And, and, you know, feeling, feeling sort of sluggish, you know, your energy's feeling sluggish as a result, well, that can impact you know, other domains. So, when you're eating a ton of sugar, you're not sleeping all that well, and you've got headaches, you can't focus that well. So, you may not be able to pay attention. And you may have trouble having things that you're trying to learn if you're having them stick. And that may be causing you know, an emotional stressor in the emotion domain. So, for going around the circle that you see, the emotion domain, you're worried or you feel, you know, you feel you're labeling yourself with nice words that aren't true, but you're just judging yourself. Right? And so, it then in terms that can cause problems, right? So then, then you feel you know, you're not able, because now you're really stressed and worried and you're not reading the place, you know, the, the, the signals of your friends are, they're telling jokes, and you're not getting the joking out laughing or you're being all serious. That's not because you chose, it's like it's a pattern, right? And so around and around we go. And it can spiral back to the point where maybe you're staying up at and worried about something. You're worried about what other people are thinking, it's a spiral effect, and it can go around and around and around. And this is called the stress cycle. So, what do we do is we begin to think, okay, I can't get rid of all of this, where can I offload a stressor or to where can I lighten some little things, so you're beginning to kind of pick away at that backpack of little things that you can do to lighten your load.

Susan Hopkins

So, we've come to the part of the of the session, where I'm going to invite you to join in to do a little bit of reflecting to think about, you know, caring for you your wellbeing and what you can understand, or maybe even just reflect a little more on it might be something you're already aware of, but just bring a little bit more understanding to the surface. So, if you have a notepad or just a piece of paper, you can certainly type away on this. If you're with others, you can just reflect and chat on this, I have several segments that we're going to take little pauses in between, and you won't have to look at me, during the pauses, you'll just see the graphic, but I will leave you a few minutes to unpack the learning here. And you can always pause the video if you need more time.

Susan Hopkins

Okay. So, the very first one we're going to look at is the Thayer Matrix. And that's what you are seeing here, Robert Thayer was a physiologist. And so, he was really interested in the relationship between the physiological state of the body. So, he was very, very focused on the body. And its impact on what we you know, in, maybe in your family, definitely, in mine, in schools and in our culture in general would consider motivation. So, so often young people, you know, we think that they need to be more motivated. It's not something Have you ever had anybody say that to you, it, it just makes you feel? Alright? Because why, you know, it's because it's not just that simple, as somebody telling you, you need to do more of it goes very, very much back to the difference between self-regulation and self-control. And Self-Reg, you know, a self-control mindset would tell you to go be more motivated. And you would just do that, because you were able to practice self-control, well, it doesn't work that well. So, in Self-Reg, what we do is we try to figure out what's blocking it. And so, there was really interested in the

Grounding living and learning in self-regulation

relationship between the underlying physiological states of that the amount of energy and the intention states and the relationship between different expressions of motivation. So, it was kind of interesting, because he discovered that so called lack of motivation on matched up with different physiological states, you know, it required a different lens and a different way of looking at it.

Susan Hopkins

So, I'll give you a mini example. Some examples as we go. This is the Thayer Matrix and there are four quadrants, you can see in our diagram that they blend together it is way more complicated than this, but I find thinking in terms of these four quadrants helps me. I use this all the time to check in on my own states, and it's even when I notice that, you know, I've shifted into, a survival brain or gone a bit red brain or all of those states that I know have to do with the central nervous system and the brain. I really think for me, one of the most helpful tools in the Self-Reg toolkit is this one, because I think in terms of energy intention, and I use this this matrix, okay, so there are four quadrants, it's basically high, some combination of energy, and tension and high and low energy, high and low energy, high and low tension. So, and I want you to remember that energy is not hyperactivity, energy is glucose and really having the energy we need to meet the demands of a situation. And he can tell that you feel good energy, when you feel awake, you can focus, you know, you just feel that you feel that good feeling. When we don't have high energy, we're exhausted. So that can come from just simply having a long day and needing to go to sleep. But other times, we're depleted. And it's just like, no matter how much sleep we get, we still feel depleted. There's also the situation where sometimes we can feel tired, but wired, you know, if you've ever had used an energy drink or drink too much coffee, for example, that kind of feeling, I feel it sometimes when I'm sick. And I'm, you know, let's just say I have a cold and, and I'm not feeling well, I can't really focus, but I can't sleep. And it's sort of that really uncomfortable feeling. So, these states sort of all connect to that.

Susan Hopkins

So, what I'd like to ask you to do is I'm going to go through the states one by one, and then each time, we're going to pause for about two minutes. And I am going to invite you to draw a picture or write down an idea, make a list, tell somebody else, a couple of things from your life, that that come to mind when you think of this state. So, times things that you're doing, that are how you would know you're in this state, some of the things you might be doing, and I'll give you some of my own as examples.

Susan Hopkins

Okay, so let's start with low energy, low tension. So that's the bottom left, and it's blue. And this is the state that we want to be in when we're going to sleep. So, you know, being low energy just means you need to plug in, that's, you know, sleep is a very important part of our wellbeing. And it's, you know, we can't live without it, we need to plug in. And so, needing to have that, sleep is you know, being low energy, that's actually fine. Your body needs to do all of the growth and restoration while you're sleeping. And so many things are happening at that time. So having a little bit of low energy is actually fine. Low tension is the key when we go to sleep, right. So, if our mind is, you know, a million miles a minute, or feeling uncomfortable, it can be a temperature thing, it can be in our own bodies. You know, if you're feeling if we have an elevated heart rate, for example, if you follow your heart rate, and notice your heart rate as you

Grounding living and learning in self-regulation

go to sleep, it will tell you something about the you know, the tension state that you're in and the readiness to go to sleep. So low energy, low tension, it's a lovely place to go into this into this blue state, the obviously one that comes you know, from sleep, but it can also just be taking you, it can be in a blue, blue area.

Susan Hopkins

During the day, if I'm taking regular little mini breaks, like just little moments. You know, I put my head back, I, for example, just a few minutes ago, I sat in my egg chair that that it's a hanging chair, and it's just really comfortable. And, and right now the temperature at the front of my house is just perfect for that. And just kind of sitting outside for a few minutes and just going right low energy, low tension. And so, it's just a little mini moment to recharge it and charging. So, I would like you to, (we're going to pause the video) you're going to see just the graphic, you're not going to see me and we're going to pause it for about two minutes. And I'm going to invite you to make a few notes about what it's like to be in this low energy, low tension state. What kind of things you'd like to do, what are the signs of it? I just went ahh. you know, okay, so no right or wrong way to do that. Just go ahead and draw your pictures. Make a list.

Susan Hopkins

All right, why did you come up with? Alright, and this one will tend to be more similar to others, but you might have come up with your afternoon siesta, you know, or you know, maybe it's you know, lying in a field watching the stars, we like to watch the meteor showers every August is another one. So, there's all sorts of things that are low energy, low, low tension, so it's really that kind of wind down feeling.

Susan Hopkins

Next, we're going to go to the yellow one, this is high energy, low tension. So, notice the connection between we're optimistic and resilience and we feel sunny, we feel hopeful. You know, and there is a good sense of energy. So, if we had to take on a whole bunch of things, right now, we would feel like we had the energy, the internal resources to deal with that. And so, you know, we might be more open, it's definitely a state that we might be more willing to look at other people's perspectives, or it's a time when we might be able to be better listeners and more present, when someone if we're trying to listen to what a young person is trying to say to us, for example. I often equate this quadrant with exercise. So if you're a runner, and you feel that lovely feeling afterwards, there's a lot of chemicals in the brain body pharmacy at work, you know, in that sense, but it can also be when you practice yoga, there's something known as yoga bliss, it can be, maybe you're exploring something, , a new path, that you're walking through the woods or a new community, or, looking at your favorite magazine, looking through something that that interests you. But you don't feel tension, there's no urge to do or be anything. It's just this moment, that of lightness. And so, there's all sorts of different things that this might look like. And it should look different from person to person. But what is something that you can do when your energy feels just great? And its sort of that I don't know the care in the world feeling. Okay. We're going to pause for two minutes again, for you to think about some of the sort of that what you might look for, if you were in a high energy, low tension state, we want to be there more.

Susan Hopkins

Alright, so the next one is this one can be confusing, and yet it's very simple when we think of it through the physiology. So, when we remember this is about energy, the brain body energy and tension. And that tension is not always bad. So, we sort of have this idea of tension headaches, and that it can be bad, we may feel (I feel) tension in my shoulders. And that is physiological tension, for sure. But we get tense as part of our brain body state change our readiness. So, if I have to go for an important job interview, I'm going to feel a bit of tension, right now you want to hope that I have, you know, high energy which I do, and, and high tension. So, this is energy expensive right now, you know, I'm using up a lot of energy, but it also feels good. long as I don't try to film for six hours in a row, you know, it can be very, very energizing. So, when we're looking for this in young people, and in ourselves, we're looking for the signs of what you might consider flow, it feels good, it's fun, it's energizing. Sports and play and, you know, art, it's not all physical activity., If you're a writer, if you're really into a great book, it's not always a low tension, it can actually be high tension. If you're really getting at the, a point in the mystery or whatever that it can actually be that kind of an experience that pulls you in. Same as it can be watching a movie that just grabs you, you know, but we tend to think of it as some sort of an active stage and a positive one, we can get stuck up here. And I'll talk to you about that in just a moment. But these are the things that this is the state I want to be in when I'm really on five to advocate for someone. I don't want to be going red brain and angry but I'm going to be tension, high tension, but I want to have high energy. And I'm also kind of trying to stay in balance because I need to articulate and communicate what I need to communicate for someone. Right? So high energy, high tension is a positive state. I wanted to go ahead now we're going to pause for two minutes and write down a few of the things that you love to do in this state or that this state reminds you of

Susan Hopkins

Okay, and here's the last one, low energy, high tension. So, I always think of the blue, the yellow and the red states, you know, the high energy, high tension is in this matrix, they all have moments that are lovely. I personally am trying to spend more time in the yellow in in the high energy, low tension. I'm always sort of very intense, I guess. And so, it's a work in progress. But I'm also trying to get really nice restorative sleep. So, it's not like any one is better than the other day all serve certain times. We can't get stuck in anyone for too long if we're low energy, low tension all day. Think about it from the original idea of motivation as Robert Thayer was interested in. if somebody is really low energy, low tension, we work on the energy. Right? What is it? What is it that that that person needs to get their energy back? What's draining the energy? Why is the energy so low? And actually, how can we build a little bit of tension up right, so remember, tension is not all bad.

Susan Hopkins

Expectations are important challenges actually bring us to life, too little can be can actually have us rubbing way too low. So, any one of these can be positive can be overdone. We want to be moving in and out of them throughout the day. That's really how the system our brains and bodies are designed. The low energy high tension, the gray one in the bottom, right. So, I have, I often think about this one. I notice it when it's coming on. I you know, I think about when I feel the stress state coming on. But I also think about when I feel that my energy bottoming out, and my tension through the roof, I used to think it is as a negative being in this bottom right state,

Grounding living and learning in self-regulation

because I equate it with when young people get in trouble if they're getting in trouble with families or in trouble at school or trouble in the community. And you actually take a close look, you'll often see the signs that before any of this happened, they were low energy, they were running on fumes, you know, and that really high, high tension, high stress. So again, that more than they can handle, and the mismatch is really hard on the brain and body. And so, it creates part of the platform that causes the stress response. So, if you're in a low energy, high tension state, and somebody comes up to you knocks your hat off your head, and it's some little thing that under normal circumstances, you might have been able to crack a joke about, and they've completely lost their cool. Well, it is it is about the stress response. It's definitely about the amygdala, and it's definitely about the prime limbic system. But it's also about the underlying physiological state. And so, it's a really interesting one from Self-Reg, it's more than just the brain and wants you to think about the body in terms of you. Let's say that somebody is in trouble in your home, and you've got nothing, you're so depleted. And it's not just for one day that you've had a very long day, which happens. It's been patterns of on and on and on and on and on a just never feeling good energy. You're not going to be able to support the young people in the ways that they need it, at least the same quality. And if you do, if you push through, you're also taking even more and more terror on your body. Right. So, we really want to think about it like that. My mentor, Dr. Stuart Shanker told me once when I said that I thought this was the state too, that this was the one to avoid at all costs. He said, "be thankful for this state because without it, you might not have noticed that you needed to restore". So that's a very freeing way to think about it, you don't choose to be bottomed out in energy. Sometimes it just happens to you, and so that's a really good signal to say that "hey, whoa, you know, I have to put me first just for a little bit". It's not selfish. I'm going to keep my responsibilities it's not that I'm not doing the things I need to do, but I'm not doing more because I've got to do something to get myself feeling a little bit better. Okay, so can be very, very helpful even if you've got other things going on that are contributing to you know, your wellbeing states, thinking about your energy intention can help. So, I'm going to pause now for two minutes. And I invite you to fill in the last quadrant of some of the things that happen when you're in this bottomed out state. So, what you notice what it feels like, what it might look like, no right or wrong way to answer that question. Okay, see you in two minutes.

Susan Hopkins

All right. So, you know, an important thing about thinking about Thayer is realizing that this applies to children and this applies to us. This is why Self-Reg is really important, the five steps, the five practices of Self-Reg, because it gives us something to work on, you know, okay, so I know my energy is bottomed out, what do I do? You work in the stress, though, because see, the heavier the overall stress load, (and that's individual, you know and it's complex), but the heavier the overall stress load, the more likely he, she, or they are to go into this low energy, high tension states, same for you. If you are doing everything for everyone, and there's a number of things in your life that are going on at the same time, your backpack gets very heavy, and you won't be able to sustain that for a while. And then all of a sudden, you're going to start to feel the outside feeling burnt out, stressed out, bombed out, you know, all of these sorts of areas that just feeling "Ugh". Right. And you can't think your way out of that. It has to be through restoration and physiological through the body, getting the body what it needs to begin coming back to that normal, that balance place where you should be waking up in the morning, most mornings feeling good and ready for the day.

Susan Hopkins

Okay, so just a quick summary before we are finished, and we're going to work on our Self-Reg profiles, which again, I'm going to flip it over to you. What is Self-Reg about? So, it is understanding the impact of excessive stress. It's distinguishing between misbehavior and stress behavior. And that's not just about children and teens, it's about us as well. If we didn't handle a situation perfectly, you can't go back. You can't put the genie back in the bottle. It's done. Right? But you can go, "oh, okay, that was a sign I'm reading the sign". "What do I need right now?" If you have to restore a relationship, or say you're sorry, you do that? You do that. But you take it as information to help and that really begins to change patterns. I find the going red brain moments, for example, happen less and less and less. So first, we begin to recognize there's more going on, there's a bit of science to explain it. Even if we don't all words, it doesn't matter. There's more going on, you know, oh, this is you know, how can I reframe this behavior in myself? And what do I need right in this particular moment, and you do your best to get it right and give it to yourself. So, avoiding modes of maladaptive self-regulation, caregivers can very easily slip into the habit of needing, you know, having so many others needing things from them. They're giving, giving, giving, they're keeping up and to keep their system running, but we're using all of those things like, the super stimulants. So, we're all about the sugar, you know, or, or what have you, could because that works that causes, you know, a cascade in our bodies, we get a bit of an energy fix, we feel okay, and then it's maladaptive. We feel worse, you know, so we're digging ourselves further and further down into that Thayer Matrix and we're feeling worse. And you know, we're begin thinking about restoration, not as just as a " Oh, I just went red brained", or "Oh, I'm so bottoming out", but noticing, first of all, infusing it into your day, every day, and in the ways that give you a little fill up and give you those little moments whenever you can manage and what means something to you. So not what other people say, is restorative, if you're not a bubble bath person, it's not a bubble bath. That's right. So, what is it? And that also beginning to think, a little further upstream? So that's true with everything with self-reg not just in the moment. Let's back it up, okay, how can I build a little bit more, and how can I make sure my, or do everything I can to make my evenings flow a little better, and that it starts with self.

Susan Hopkins

Okay, so I hope that you have your, your journal, your notepad ready to go. And I'm going to invite you to build a Self-Reg profile, we will include a link here to a profile that goes along with this, that you can actually fill out. If you like it's free to access to, you know, just a little mini booklet that goes along with this. But you can also just scribble it out on a piece of paper, okay, and so we're going to take just a couple of minutes between each of these, you are very free, I invite you to pause and take more time, if you need more time. The truth is that as we think about this profile, and write things down, you know, I've been developing figuring my, my Self-Reg out over years, and sometimes things change, and sometimes things that work don't work anymore. But it becomes a way of thinking, and a way of engaging in a way of reflecting and so that's what this is sort of the very first layer. Alright, are you ready?

Susan Hopkins

So, the very first one I want you to do, is we're going to reframe some behaviors. So, my invitation to you is to list three things, you know, in private for yourself, that you do that, you

Grounding living and learning in self-regulation

know, you've regretted or that you don't feel is your perfect parenting side or your perfect caregiving side, or perfect human side are ones that have bothered you in the past. I like to call them my most Oh, human moments, okay. And then what you're going to do, you just have to list them. That's all you have to do for this first step. But if you do want to take it a step further, you can, you can add a couple of notes about how to reframe it. So how to see it a little bit differently. And so that would be a second step. But for this one is just what are those behaviors that I want to see differently?

Susan Hopkins

Okay, so I'm going to give you three examples for me, that are three behaviors that I want to reframe. Okay, so things that I would change if I could, let me think so one of them is leaving my kitchen messy. You know, I often felt guilty. My messy kitchen, my messy kitchen, my messy kitchen. I've come, you know, to a certain amount of peace with it, how can I reframe it? You know, it tends to get messier when I'm under more stress, you know, so it's that it can have to do with, you know, perception of amount of time in the day, I get, you know, can be emotional, there can be frustration, overwhelmed. There are all sorts of things that can go into what makes for a messy kitchen, but okay, so that's one of my first, my first things. The important thing is I'm not a bad human or bad mom. It's a sign of excessive stress. Okay, that's one.

Susan Hopkins

Number two, impulse buying online. Trying to think of ones that are relevant right now, I've worked through a lot, right. Impulse buying online. So, I've noticed I have a habit that it comes when actually finances might be the tightest, where I can find myself and I bought things that I don't need, and I could have bought locally. Especially in this time of COVID, which is when I'm filming this, you know, becomes easier, but the reframing that so guess what happens when I impulse buy online? Aha, I get a little dopamine rush. I do. And so, it's actually a maladaptive mode of self-regulation. I feel better in the moment, and then I feel worse, okay, so that's it. That's the second one.

Susan Hopkins

The third one, I'm going to just say, number three is one I've worked through for years. Doesn't happen much anymore. But it's going red brain. So, losing my patience, as a parent, to getting really frustrated, and it happens all the time, still, I'm human. You're going to be human. And so, the other day I got grumpy, a little bit grumpy over something that didn't happen exactly the moment it was supposed to happen. And it's a situation that I've set up over and over again, we had to leave at a certain time. And, you know, of course, we're late in the last-minute things and you know, and you feel yourself sort of like this situation. So, you know, being in reframing it, the situation is what the situation is. My response is what I want to reframe. That, it was at the end of the day, I had a lot of expectations on me and if I think about stressors in all the domains: I was frustrated, I had laid out the plans, I felt like that wasn't respected, which, you know, is a sense of pro social stress. So, the reframe is that it's just a sign of excessive stress on another day, I would have handled that a lot better. So, there you go. Those are my three behaviors to reframe. I went way deeper than I had originally planned to just sort of to give you sort of a light, a light idea, and a little bit of a glimpse at reframing Your turn. Here we go. See in two minutes.

Grounding living and learning in self-regulation

Susan Hopkins

Okay, so we're going to do next we're going to recognize some stressors. We're going to make a list. You don't have to worry which domain they're in or whether you have it in the right language. There's no right or wrong with this. I just want you to scribble out as many, (you're going to have two minutes) to list as many things as you can think of that are energy zappers for you. So, you know there's sensory ones, there's little ones, the fingernails on a chalkboard, for example, or those sorts of those kinds of examples. Textures can be lights, things that other people do, environmental things, things connected to the weather, strong emotions, so there's no right or wrong. I just want you to come up with a list. And you're going to write as many as you can in two minutes. Okay, the things that zap your energy go!

Susan Hopkins

All right, number three, practice three, so reduce your stress, I would like you to do this in two parts. So, one is just thinking about the things that you could easily do tomorrow just to dial down a little bit of stress. So, stress on your body stress on your brain and body things that make your brain and body have to use energy. Right, that gobble up energy, the things that are easy for you to do, (changing other people is not easy, right). Little things that you could do some little thing that you could do. And the other one I want you to do. So, we're still going to just take two minutes, I want you to start by making the list of a couple of things. Remember, this shouldn't feel like more to do's or should's. This should be things that that you can come up with that actually seemed pretty easy and aren't going to add more stress to your stress load.

Susan Hopkins

You know, I turn off my phone at night. And I know don't just unplug it, I turn it off unless there's some reason I'm listening, worried about an emergency, it's off at night. That's reducing what my brain and body are having to process while I'm sleeping because your brain knows that phone's on near you and it does listen for notifications, believe it or not, it affects you. So, what are the little things that that you could do that would just dial down a little bit of your stress. So, I want you to list as many as you can. And we only have two minutes. So, you might spend your whole two minutes doing that. But if you run out of time, if you run out of ideas, go back to your list that you did for practice number two, recognizing stressors and see if you can identify one or two that you might be able to dial things down for. Okay, ready go.

Susan Hopkins

All right, we've got two more to go, and then it's my time to say goodbye. I hope that as we finish up here that I've sparked some interest for you in learning more about Self-Reg. And they've validated just how important you are and how much your Self-Reg matters, too. So, practice number four is reflect so stress aware. What I would like you to do for this one, is, I would like you to make two lists, imagine they are for me. You have never met me, or you don't know me, and you want to tell me "Susan, when I'm calm and just in the zone, and it's a teachable talkable work through the problem kind of moment, or it's a really good moment for us to try to create together when I'm feeling good. These are the ways you'll know look for these things." "When I'm not calm, here's what I want you to look for.

Susan Hopkins

Grounding living and learning in self-regulation

Okay, so you know, one of mine for being calm as I can be funny. And when I'm in a good state, I can be funny, I'm really self-aware. I'm a much better listener. Those are some things you could look for in me. When I'm not calm, I might be blurting and interrupting, or might not be keeping as much eye contact, you might see me more fidgety than I normally am. So, no right or wrong two lists they are for me, or someone you don't know, and you want to say that this is what to look for in me. Here are the things to look for when I'm calm, and here's what to look for when I'm not, (and we see what when I'm not with soft eyes). Okay, ready, you can start your lists, we'll see you in two minutes.

Susan Hopkins

And number five, practice five. So, the very last one is I want you to think of at least four or five things that truly feel restorative to you. The things that fill up your tank that are not maladaptive modes of self-regulation. So, they're not like temporary, I feel better and then I feel worse, but that that when you have more of this life, this in your life, you feel better. And you know what, wherever you can fill in some restoration is important. Okay, so go ahead and make your list. We'll stop for two minutes. And I'll see you then. Bye.

Susan Hopkins

All right, well this is the end of our session our third of three sessions. And I just want to remind you of where we started and just how important you are the contributions to our communities, our families, our society, and the wellbeing of young people. You know, I really hope for you to have as much restoration and to feel as healthy and well and appreciated as I truly feel you deserve. So, thank you very much. If you're interested in learning more about Self-Reg you can see on our website there self-reg.ca there are more courses, we have parenting courses. We have all kinds of resources and opportunities for you to dive in and learn more and know that you matter. Take care Bye.