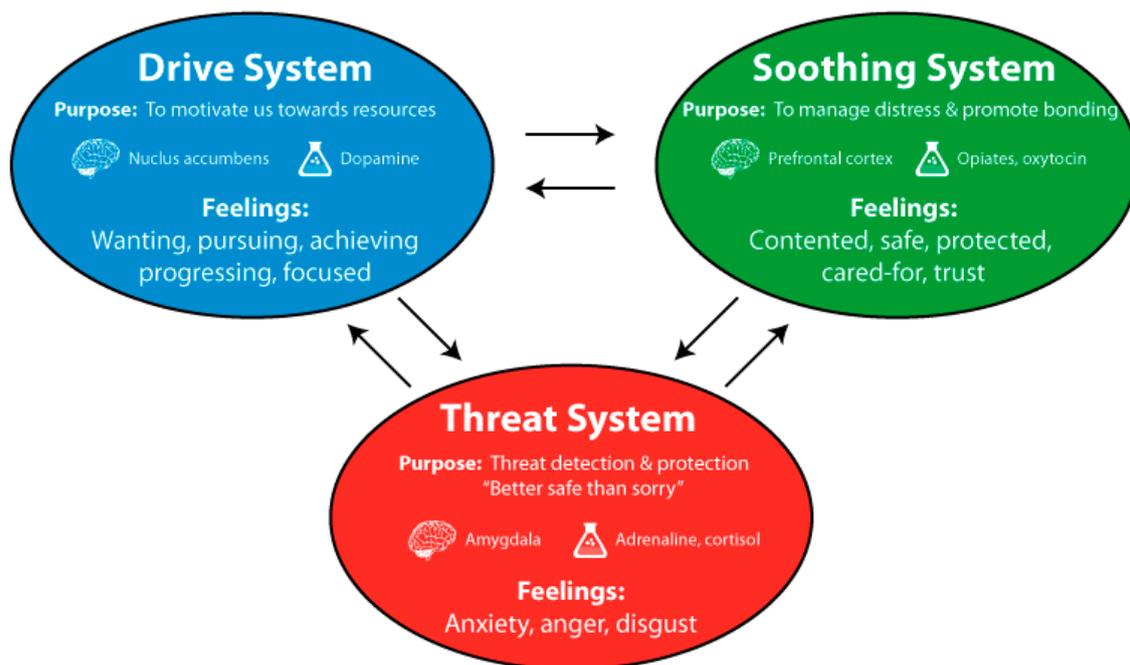


How to manage stress: Exploring key emotions in challenging situations

'The 3 Systems Model' (by Paul Gilbert)

Emotional Regulation Systems

Paul Gilbert's evolutionary model proposes that human beings switch between three systems to manage their emotions. Each system is associated with different brain regions and different brain chemistry. Distress is caused by imbalance between the systems, often associated with under-development of the soothing system.



1) Threat

'Fight or Flight'

Anger or Anxiety

Negativity bias

Cortisol – stress hormone

Can be good as it helps us stay safe in difficult circumstances so it is good if you are in a very threatening environment ... However you can have an overload of this which is not healthy and it does wear you down.

It is important to reflect on your own threat system and what triggers it...

Think about your own personal threat system – what is triggering it – to what extent/extreme do certain things trigger it – and what are the main emotions brought out by this.

2) Drive

When we are motivated/passionate/determined to pursue goals that are important too us or interest us.

Certain things will stimulate our drive system e.g. if you are into art then you will be more driven in art class at school.

It is good to challenge yourself (and others) to achieve their goals.

Exercise stimulates the positive drive system.

Dopamine – hormone triggered by achievement that brings joy... it feels good.

Drive is mostly a positive system... However it is close to the threat system. You could be really driven and work hard for something e.g. a job promotion and if you then are not successful in getting that promotion it can lead to massive disappointment and being worn out.

It is easy to get carried away and burn out in the drive system so you need to be careful.

It is important to reflect on your own drive system and what triggers it...

So think about what events and activities drive you - reflect at where you are at the moment with this – and think about the emotions brought out by this.

3) Soothing System

Feeling calm, content and relaxed.

The soothing system helps to balance out the other two systems.

It can help us to create a reflective space which stimulates this system and makes us feel calmer.

This system is closely linked to humans feeling loved, secure, warmth, good attachment.

It is good to think about places you have been or go to that you have a positive attachment too. This place will stimulate the soothing system.

Certain people can stimulate your soothing system too... as can animals (pets) – as they have big links to positive attachment and a calming feeling.

Activities can also stimulate the soothing system as certain activities such as cooking, cuddling can give the feeling of being soothed.

Knowing how to stimulate the soothing system if/when needed will help. E.g. exercise, music, bath, talk to a friend, avoid the news, have down time.

If you are struggling/stressed/wound up then step out of this and do something soothing. Manage your own levels of stress and be calm (crucial in parenting.)

Finding time to stimulate your soothing system is so important. It helps yo

It is important to reflect on your own soothing system and what triggers it...

Think about how you can stimulate your soothing system and what stimulates is – also think about what emotions are brought out by this.

‘The Compassionate Mind’ book by Paul Gilbert that was recommended on the webinar.

Feelings: -

- reflecting on feelings
- how they are triggered
- what effect it has
- how often it is triggered
- to what extreme it is triggered

Balance – it is important to reflect on how balanced these three systems are for you. It is good to get a sense of where you are at ... then what you can do to balance this out.

Our brains are often hard wired to the negative side ... self awareness of this is good. Consciously find ways to **stimulate the positive!**

‘The Positive Kitbag’

Having things that make you feel good and bring out the positive all gathered together for you to refer to. These will stimulate the positive and your soothing system. Examples could include inspirational quotes, music you like, photos of people or places, activity ideas, smells you like.

Practice the breathing!!

Breathing practices for time out are helpful. A lot of these can be found online.

Supporting Children

- You can support children to be more positive by tuning into their interests and what motivates them. Also find what soothes them. Get outdoors where possible.
- Talk to children about things that will stimulate their positive systems e.g. where they like to go to feel calm, what activities they like doing, what motivates them ... have open discussion and tell them about yours too.
- For older children... you can talk about the three systems and by understanding it themselves they can reflect and work on their own systems too.
- Guide/Support/Encourage children to have goals and to accomplish them (do not apply too much pressure though – especially with SEN children.)
- As a parent you must find time to soothe your own system.
- Prioritise children's mental health over anything else e.g. home education during Covid.