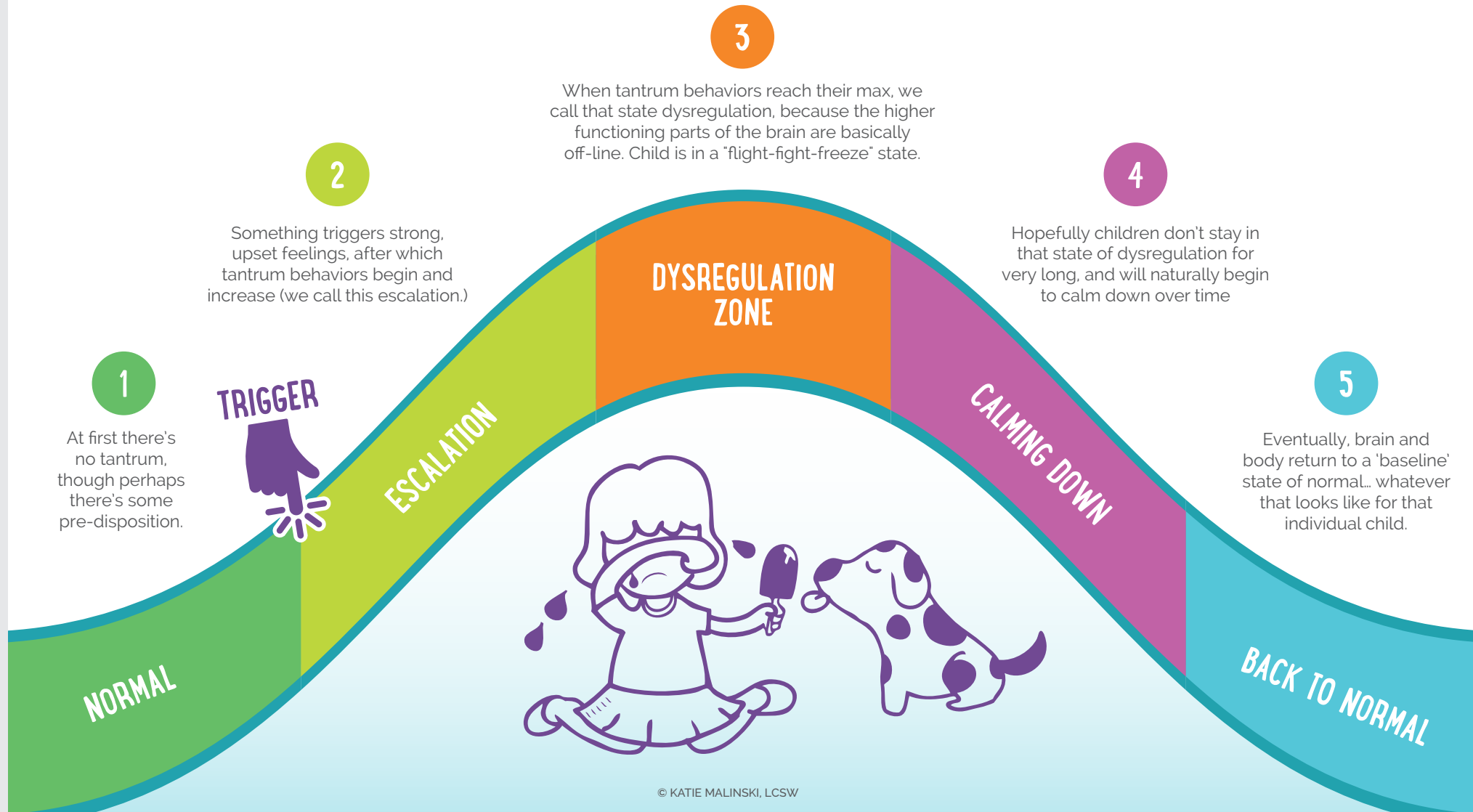


The Arc of the Tantrum

IMAGINE THAT WE CAN PLOT A TANTRUM ON A GRAPH...

LEVEL OF TANTRUM



1

At first there's no tantrum, though perhaps there's some pre-disposition.

TRIGGER



2

Something triggers strong, upset feelings, after which tantrum behaviors begin and increase (we call this escalation.)

ESCALATION

3

When tantrum behaviors reach their max, we call that state dysregulation, because the higher functioning parts of the brain are basically off-line. Child is in a "flight-fight-freeze" state.

DYSREGULATION ZONE

4

Hopefully children don't stay in that state of dysregulation for very long, and will naturally begin to calm down over time

CALMING DOWN

5

Eventually, brain and body return to a 'baseline' state of normal... whatever that looks like for that individual child.

BACK TO NORMAL

© KATIE MALINSKI, LCSW

TIME

THERE'S MORE!

BEFORE TRIGGER

- Everything is OK, or
- Predisposed for trouble, ie: dinnertime, rough day, over-tired.



PREVENTION TECHNIQUES

- Classic stuff like sleep, exercise, nutrition, consistent routines, and clear & consistent expectations
- "Front-loading"
- Overall help the child to be their best self.

ESCALATION

- Whining
- Arguing
- Yelling
- Physical tension in body builds



DE-ESCALATION TECHNIQUES

- Keep yourself calm.
- Send de-escalation signals: take deep, slow, quiet breaths. Check your physical posture—your body should be relaxed, and not too tall or too close to your child. Slow your physical movements. Reduce or stop talking.
- Put on your "Face of Compassion."
- Let your child be "seen and felt."

DYSREGULATION ZONE

- Being "flooded"—brain isn't working.
- Fight, flight or freeze
- Screaming
- Hitting
- Throwing



SELF-MANAGEMENT & HEALTHY BOUNDARIES

- Assure safety for living things.
- Keep or regain your own calm. If you aren't calm, take your own time out—staying present when you are upset only makes things worse.
- Be available to help your child regain their regulation, or manage their environment to help with this.
- Practice healthy emotional boundaries. Avoid: talking, lecturing, rationalizing, fixing, advising, debating, correcting, threatening. Verbal interventions unlikely to work.
- Some kids need more space from you during this time, some kids need you to be physically present, but generally without much talking or involvement.

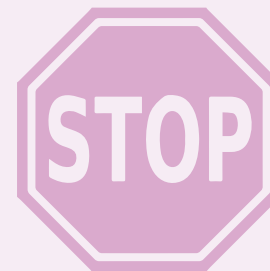
CALMING DOWN

- Quieter voices
- Slower movements
- Hiding
- Physical "slump"



WAIT!

- If your child is de-escalating, LET THEM! Don't intervene and mess it up.
- Time passing is helpful in de-escalation. Avoid rushing into the circle-back phase.
- Look for a physical slump or relaxation.
- "Do you want a hug to help you with your feelings?"
- Remember, you might need this time, too. Check your own physical state before re-engaging, too.



BACK TO NORMAL

- Looks, acts, and reacts like your normal kid.



CIRCLE BACK

- An hour or a week later, you can circle back to address important things related to the incident.
- Most important: reconnect the relationship and repair. Apologize for your part.
- Teach. For example, you can talk about the healthy coping skills YOU use when you have a hard time, that your child might also find helpful.
- Reparation. Work with your child to identify something that you can do together to 'make right' in some way.
- Please note, you don't need to do all of these. Every situation doesn't need a lesson and/or reparation, and some kids will have to work hard to build the ability to tolerate more than a few seconds of a circle back conversation.



PARENTHOOD, UNDERSTOOD: Positive insights. Practical tools. Peaceful families.

www.katiemalinski.com

