



# Parenting an Emotionally Dysregulated Teen

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Alyson is a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist in California with over a decade of clinical experience in a variety of settings. Alyson has worked extensively in residential treatment and has come to specialize in the treatment of teens with emotion dysregulation and suicidal behaviors. As an intensively trained DBT therapist with a commitment to evidence-based treatment, Alyson has guided the clinical teams at Evolve on effective practices with teens who show signs of borderline personality disorder. Alyson is dedicated to compassionate and effective treatment for BPD as well as destigmatizing the disorder among mental health professionals.



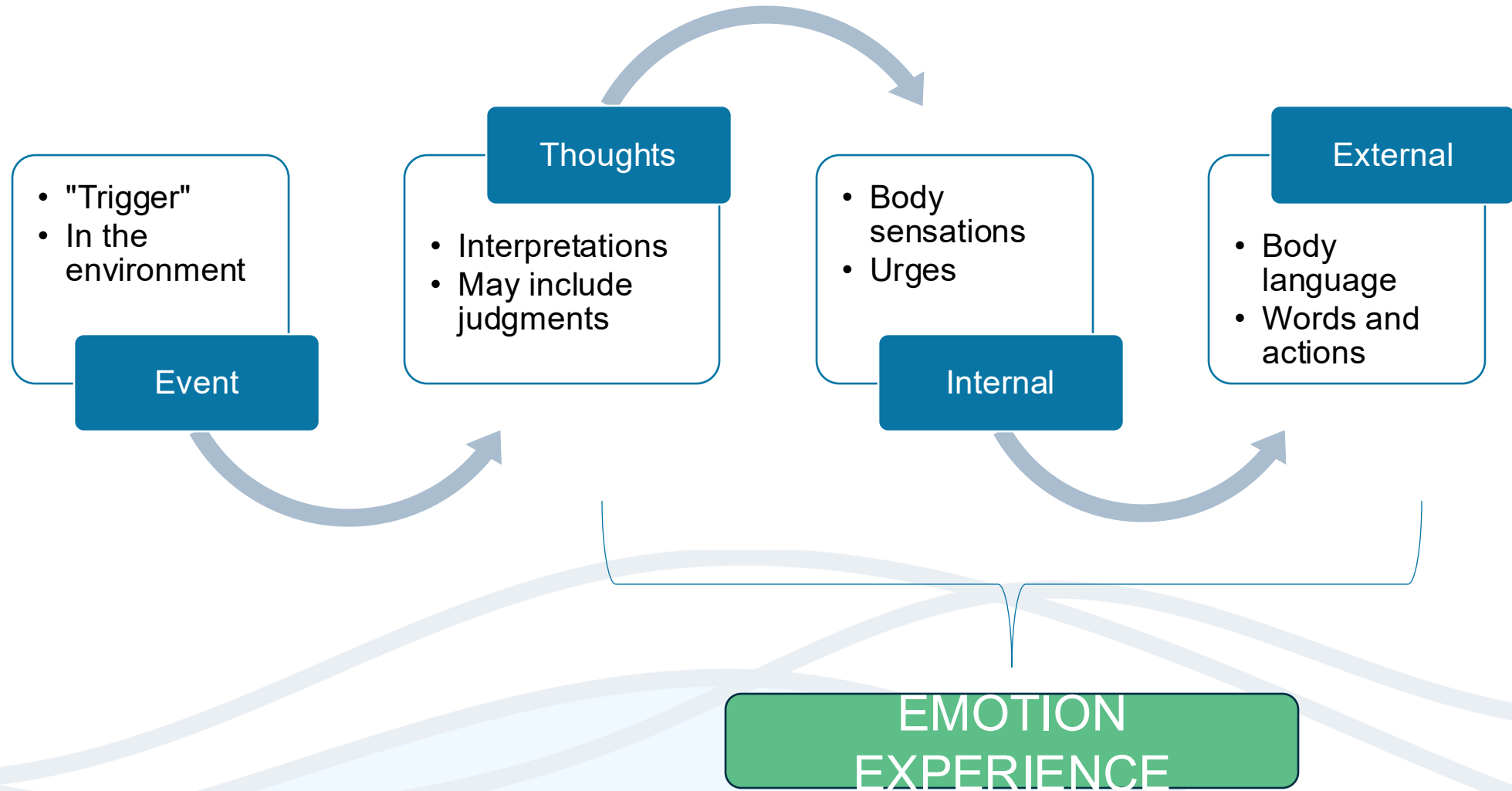
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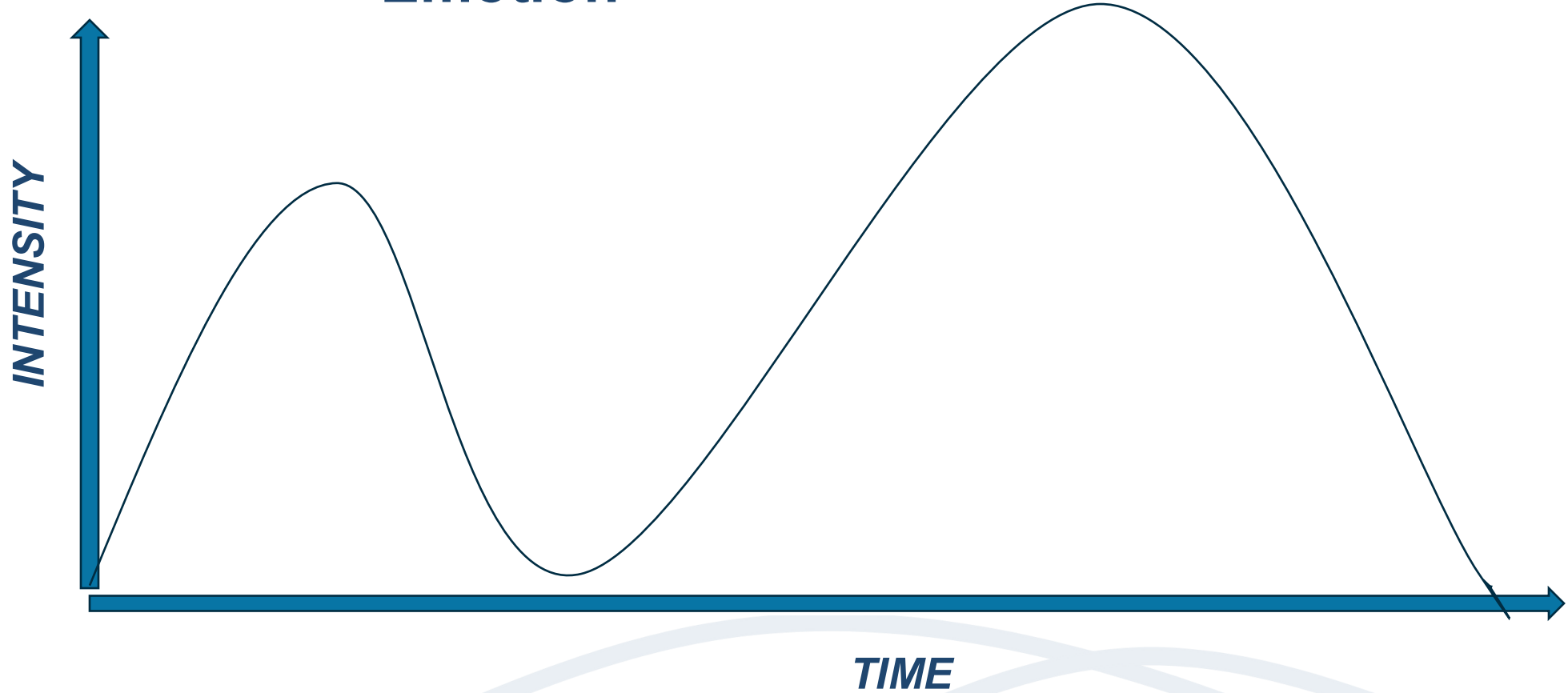
## *I'm glad you're here!*

- Loving someone with big emotions can be tough.
- You may feel burned out, frustrated, and helpless.
- You may not know how to support your teen and that makes sense.
- There *are* things you can do to help your teen regulate and help you regulate in the process.

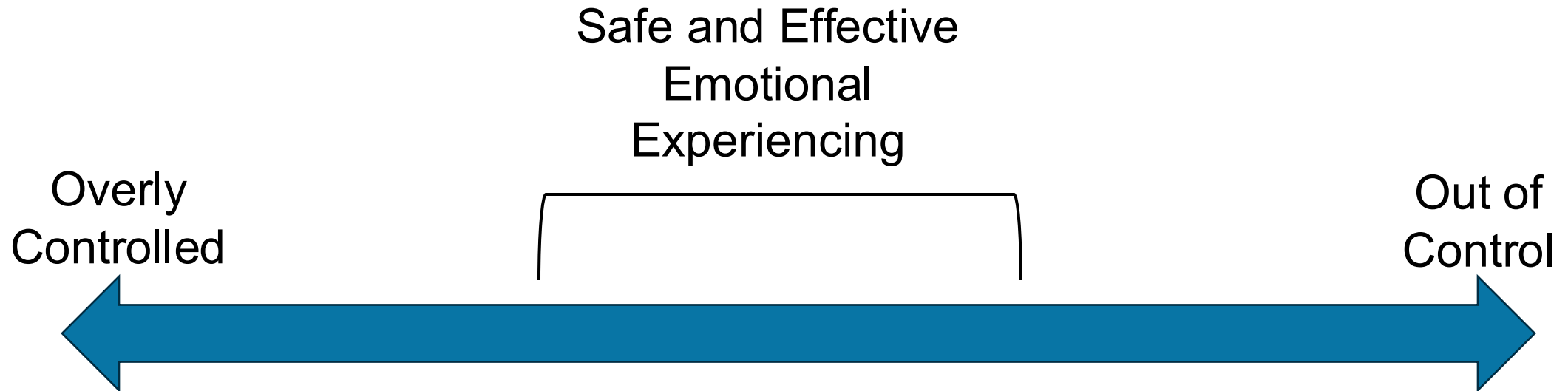
# Emotions 101



# Riding the Waves of Emotion



# Emotion Experiencing Spectrum



Where does your *teen* fall on this spectrum?  
Where do *you* fall?

# Biological Roots

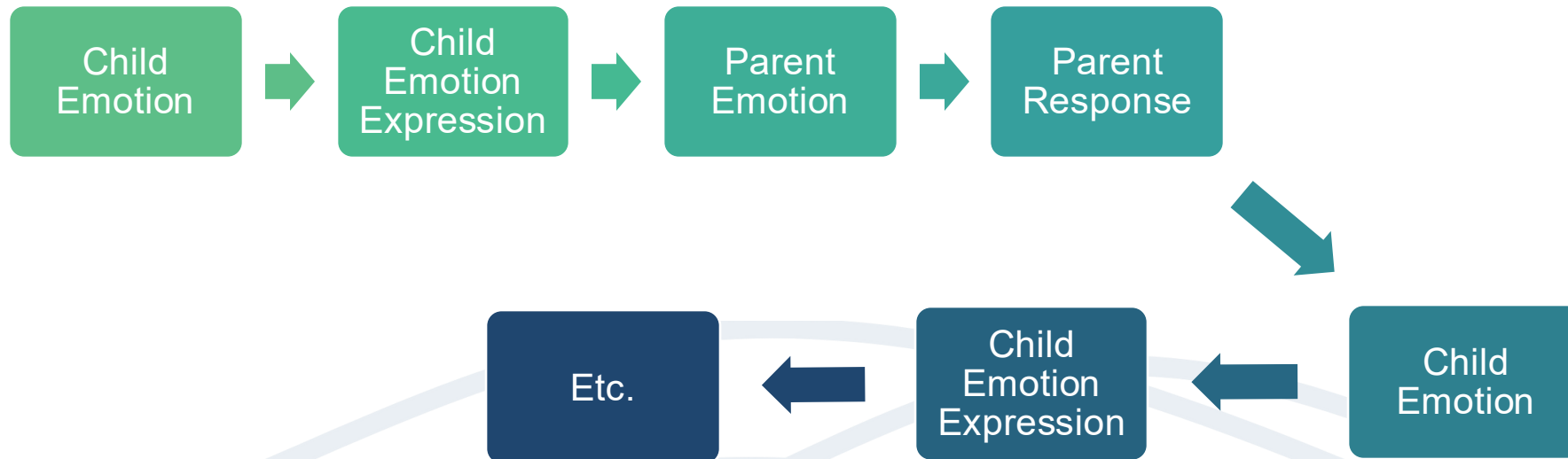
Some people are born with higher emotional vulnerability.

- Intense emotional experiencing
- More sensitive to environmental cues
- May take longer to calm down



# Childhood Learning

How we respond to a child experiencing intense or painful emotions shapes how they learn to regulate them.





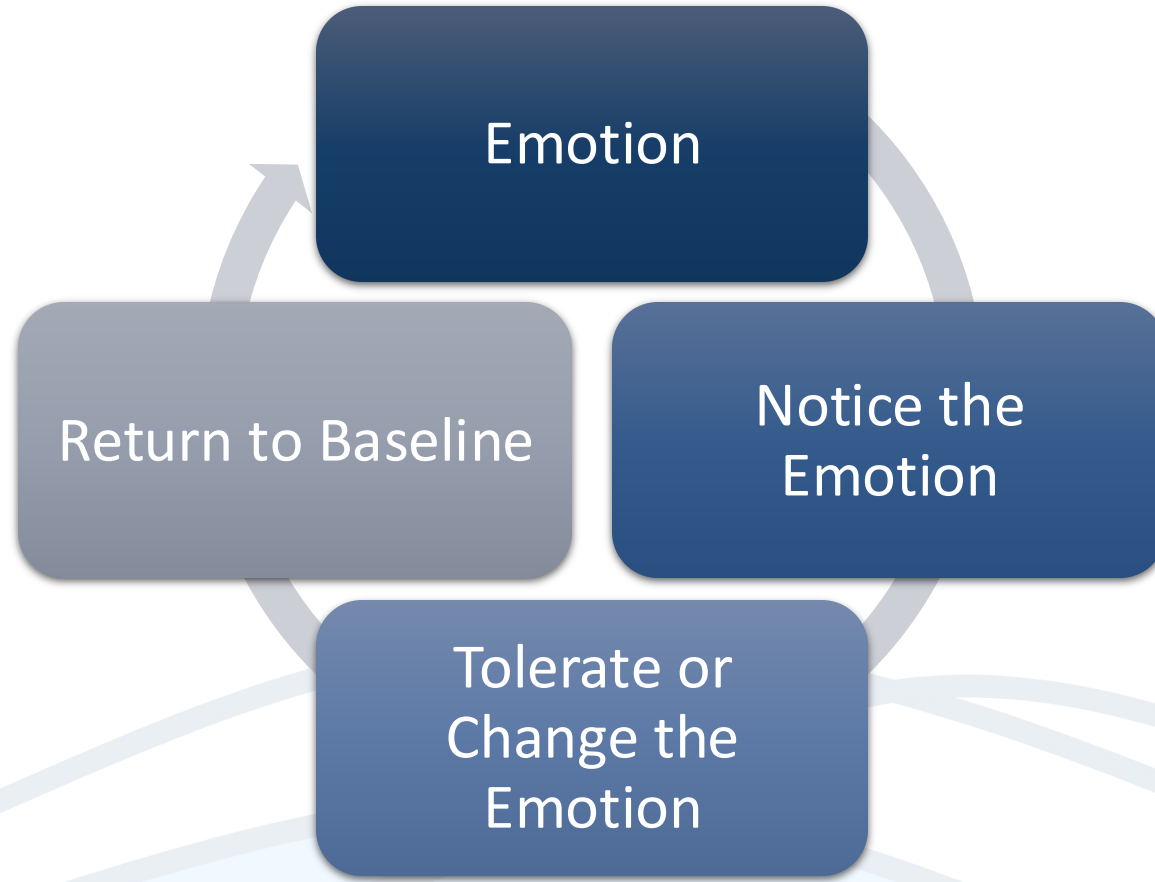
# What is Emotion Regulation?

Noticing and understanding emotions

Preventing vulnerability to difficult emotions

Responding to difficult emotions

# What Regulation Looks Like

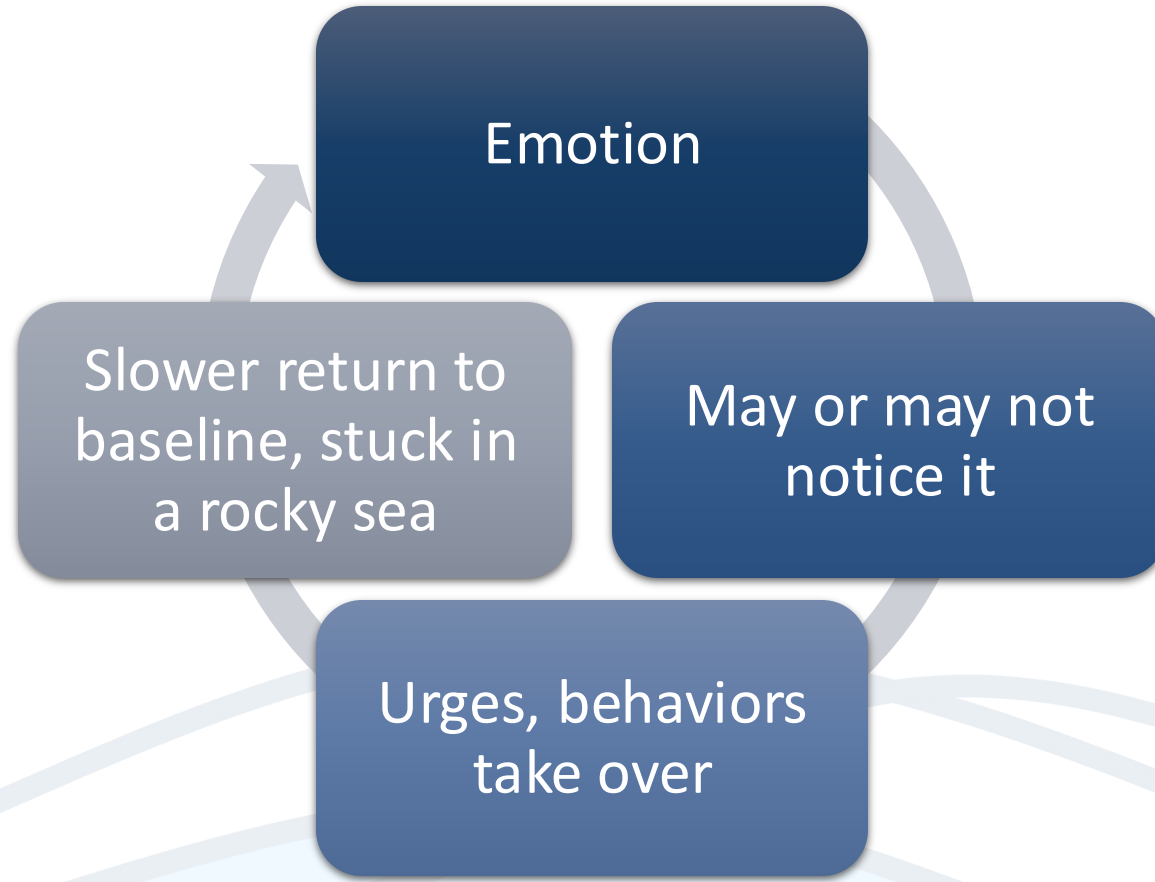


# Emotion Dysregulation

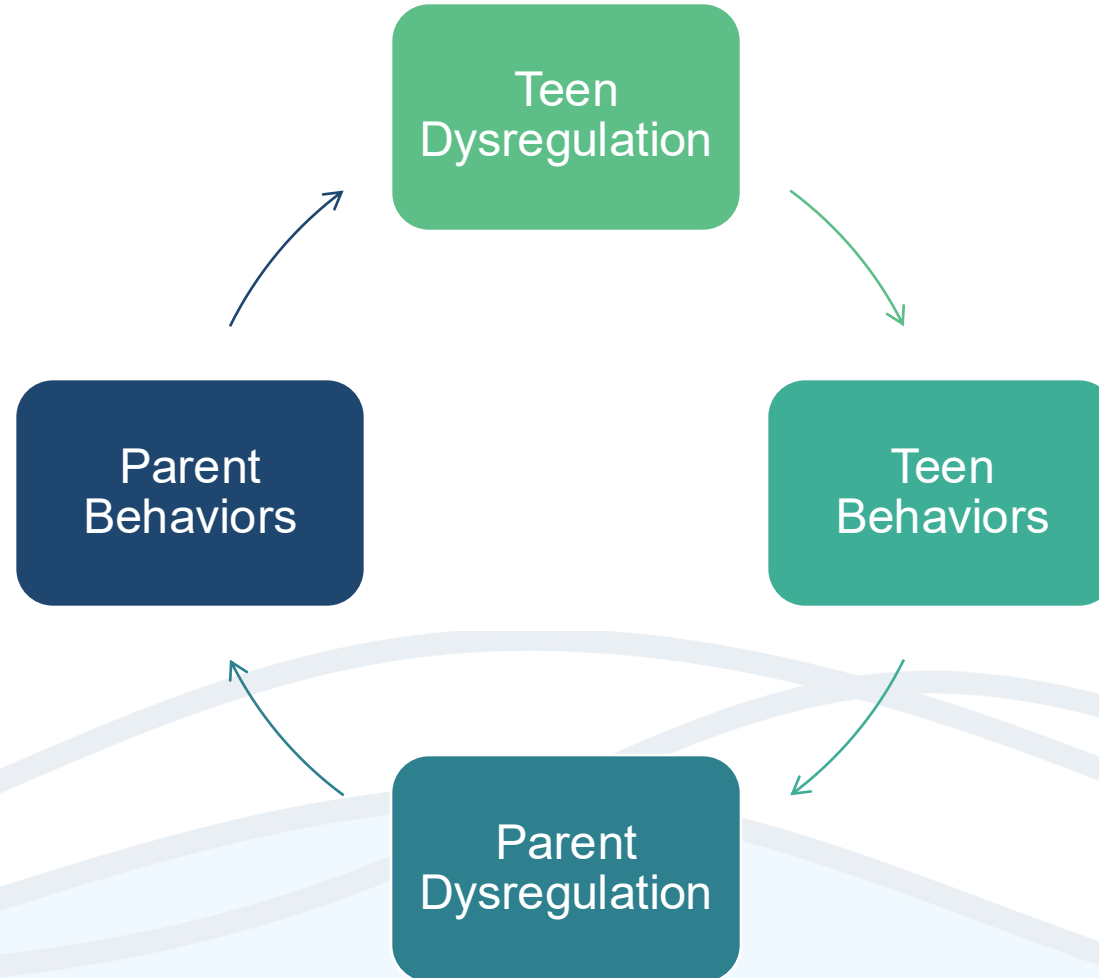
Dysregulation occurs when emotions spiral out of control, leading to unhelpful (and sometimes harmful) behaviors.

Waves of emotions keep hitting and it can be hard to keep your head above water.

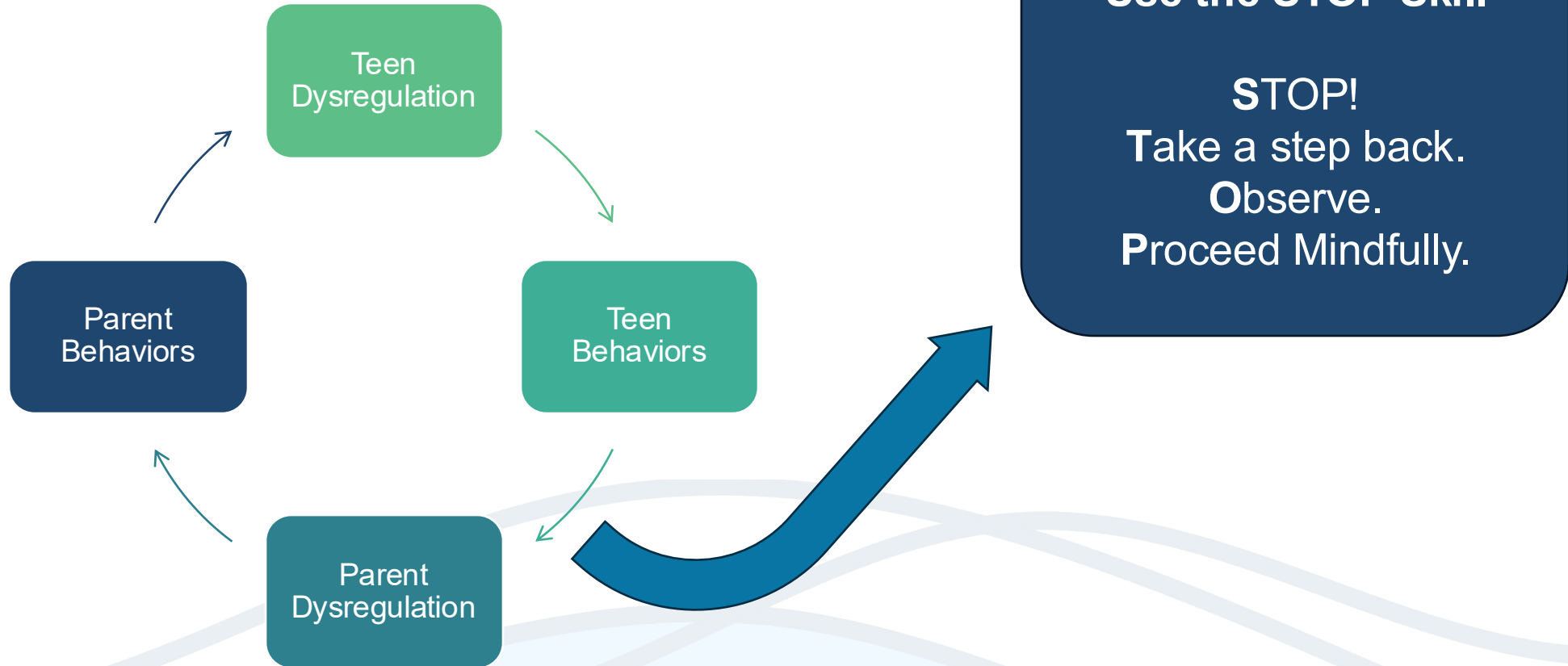
# What Dysregulation Looks Like



# Dysregulation Can Be...Dysregulating!



# Step 1: Regulating Yourself!





# Stop the Cycle

1. STOP!
2. Slow down.
3. Notice your emotions, thoughts, and urges.
4. Regulate yourself.
5. Support your teen with regulating.

# How to Regulate Emotions

Take steps to prevent vulnerability to intense or out-of-control emotions

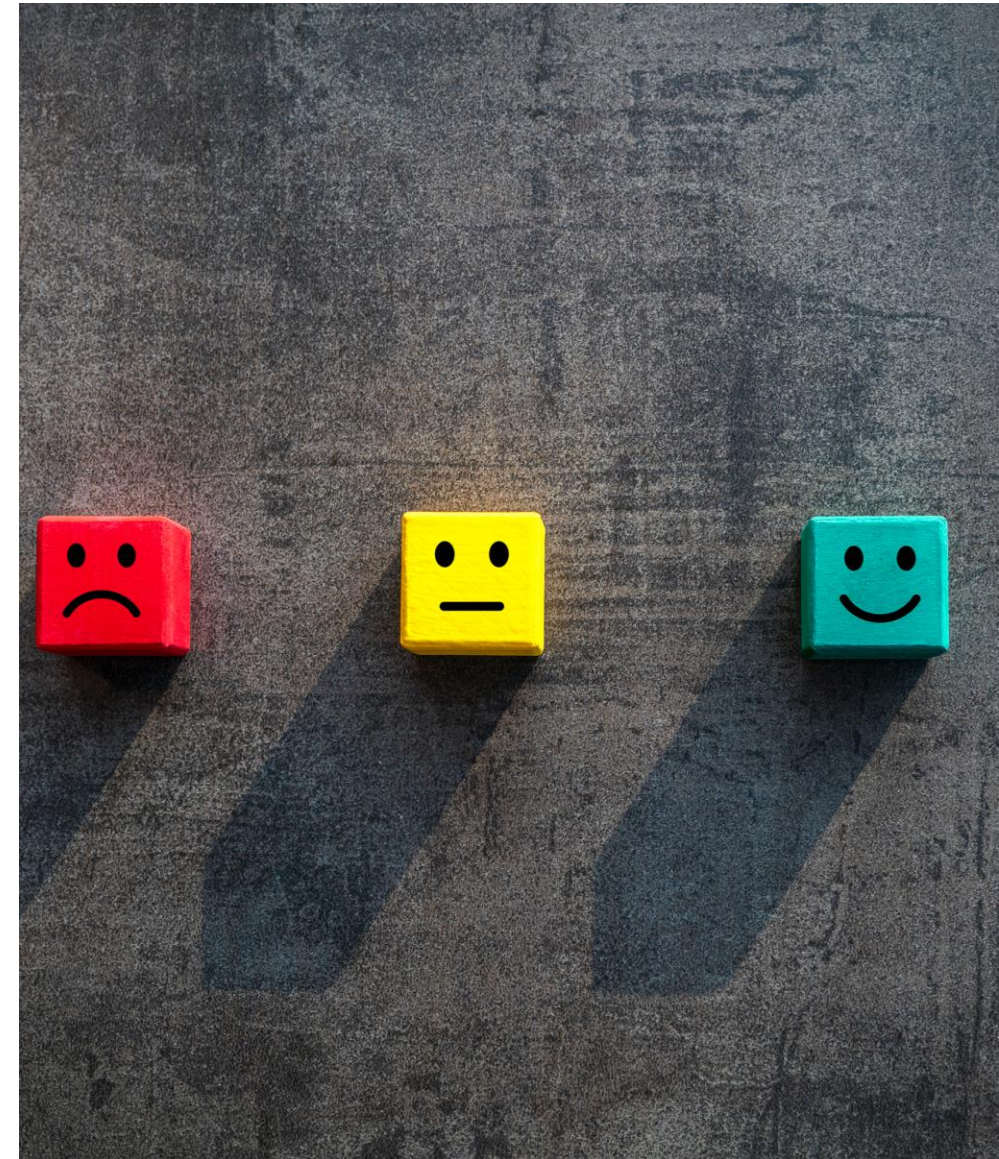
- getting enough sleep, eating balanced meals, taking care of your body

Take steps to safely experience emotions

- allow emotion experiencing without shutting it down or allowing it to spiral out of control

Take back control of emotional experiencing

- creating positive emotions
- changing your emotions when needed



# Helping Your Teen Regulate

Validate, validate, validate!

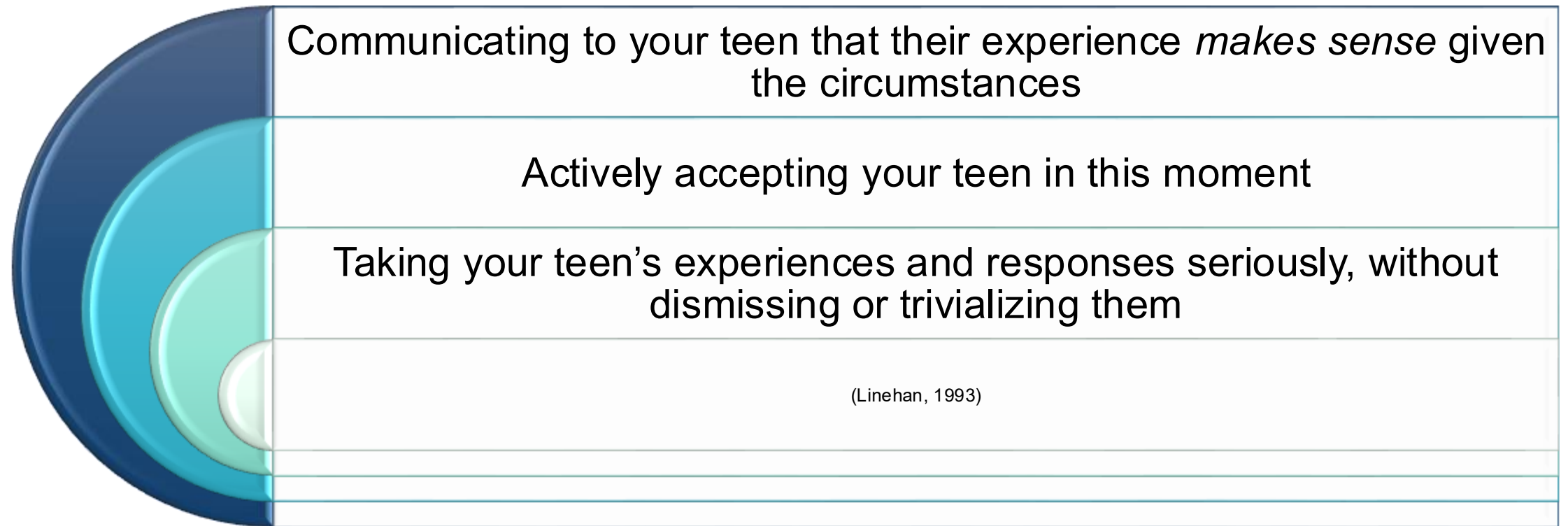
Avoid judgments

Avoid extremes

Wait to problem solve

Take breaks when needed

# What is Validation?



# Validation is Key



Helps build and maintain relationships



Takes away the pressure to focus on who is “right”



Helps to regulate you AND your teen



Invalidation is painful

# Ways to Validate



Fully and actively listen.

Reflect back what you are hearing.

Read between the lines.

Acknowledge how their experience makes sense.

Be genuine.

(Linehan, 1993)

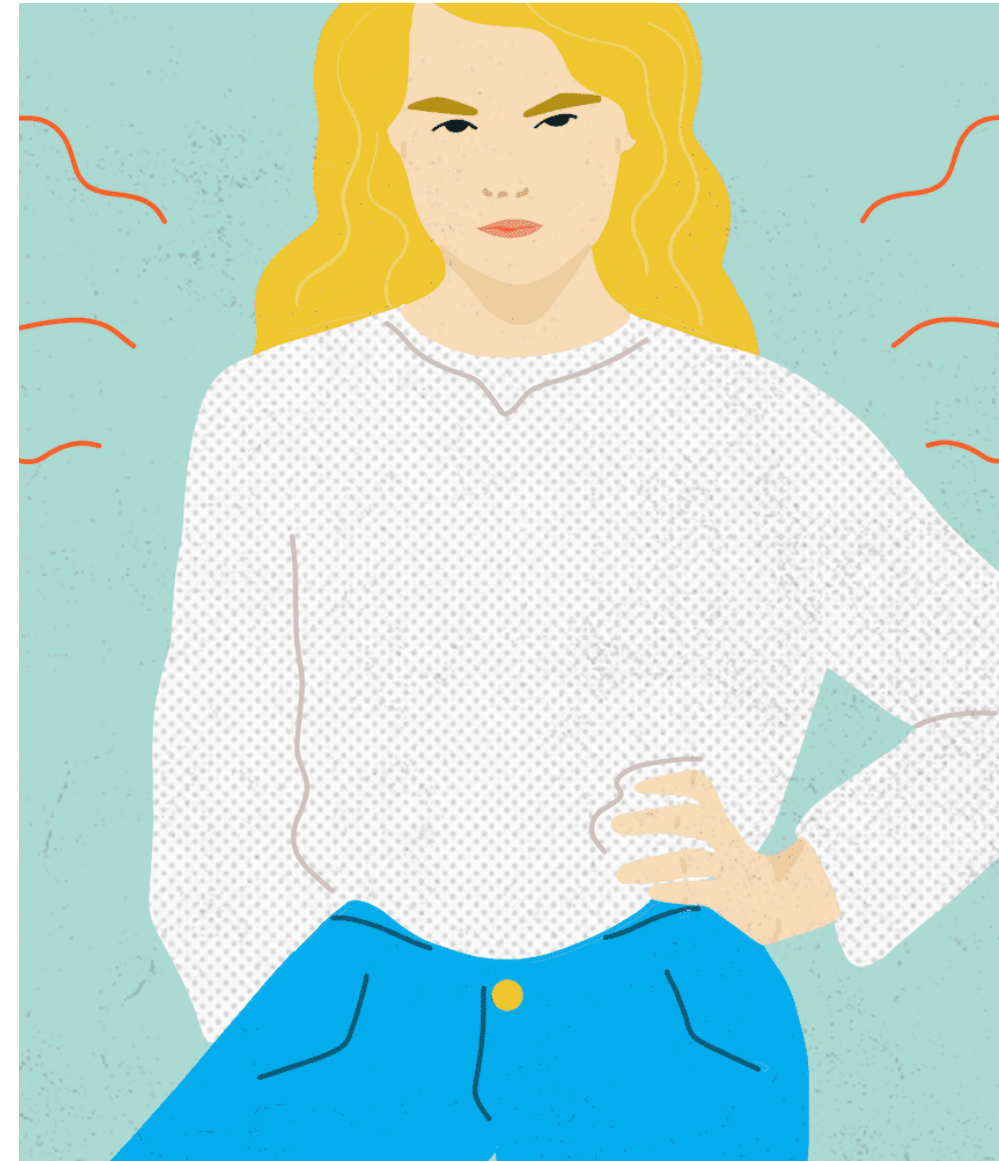
# Judgments

Can come up during our own dysregulation

"They're always so disrespectful!"

"They're manipulative."

"They're acting like a spoiled brat!"



# The Problem with Judgments

Can intensify emotions and lead to dysregulation

Keeps you from observing and being open to new information

Can cause invalidation

Often makes attempts at support ineffective

# Reframing Towards Validation and Nonjudgment

**Unhelpful Statement:** *You shouldn't get so upset! Calm down!*



**Reframe:** *I can tell that you are really struggling. How can I help?*

**Unhelpful Statement:** *You are being so disrespectful!*



**Reframe:** *Can we talk about this in a different way? Can we talk about this when we have both cooled off?*

**Unhelpful Statement:** *You are always so manipulative!*



**Reframe:** *It is easier for me to understand and help you when you are direct with your words about how you feel and what you want.*

# Avoiding Extremes

All-or-nothing, black and white thinking

Can lead to extreme emotions and extreme behaviors

Can often be invalidating

Often ignores essential truths



# Move Towards Balance

Slow down

Replace “either/or” with “both/and”

Acknowledge the truth in multiple perspectives

Avoid generalization-- "you always..."



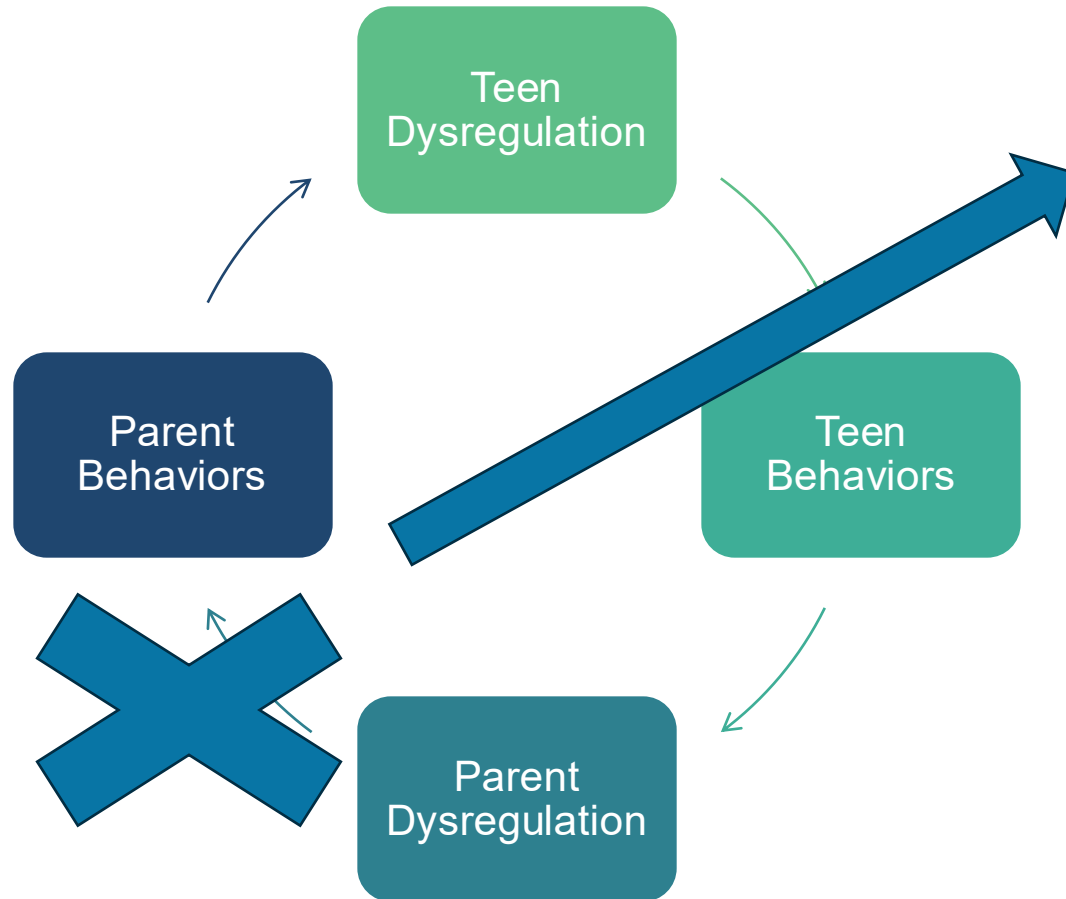
# But First, Validation

*During painful situations, jumping to offer solutions can feel invalidating and make the pain worse.*

Instead...

- 1. Slow down.**
2. Validate the experience and the emotions present.
3. Ask your teen what would be helpful in that moment.
  1. Stick with validation for now?
  2. Trying to feel better or tolerate a problem?
  3. Solving a problem?

# Take Breaks



Disrupt an unhelpful cycle by taking breaks to regulate. Put the problem on a shelf until you and your teen are more prepared to talk about it effectively.

Give space to  
*ride the wave.*



# Take Care of Yourself



Be gentle with yourself— you're doing the best you can



Validate yourself



Don't expect perfection (it doesn't exist!)



# References & Resources

## References:

*Cognitive-Behavioral Treatment of Borderline Personality Disorder*, by Marsha Linehan

## Resources:

*Parenting a Child Who Has Intense Emotions*, by Pat Harvey, ACSW LCSW-C and Jeanine A. Penzo, LCSW

*The Power of Validation*, by Karyn D. Hall, PhD, Melissa H. Cook, LPC, and Shari Y. Manning, PhD

# Questions?





Adolescent Behavioral Health

## Thank you for attending!

Contact us today to learn more about our treatment programs for teens.

**(877) 203-7229**

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This weekly parent support group provides a safe space for parents and caregivers to connect, share resources, and gain practical guidance and emotional support. This group is free and open to any parent of a teen.

**Scan the code to learn more or to register.**

