

Leicestershire Virtual School

Emotion Coaching

Penny Boyd

Emotion coaching enables young people to manage their own behaviour through helping them to understand the different emotions they experience, why they occur, and how to handle them.

*It aids de-escalation
to allow restorative
discussions.*

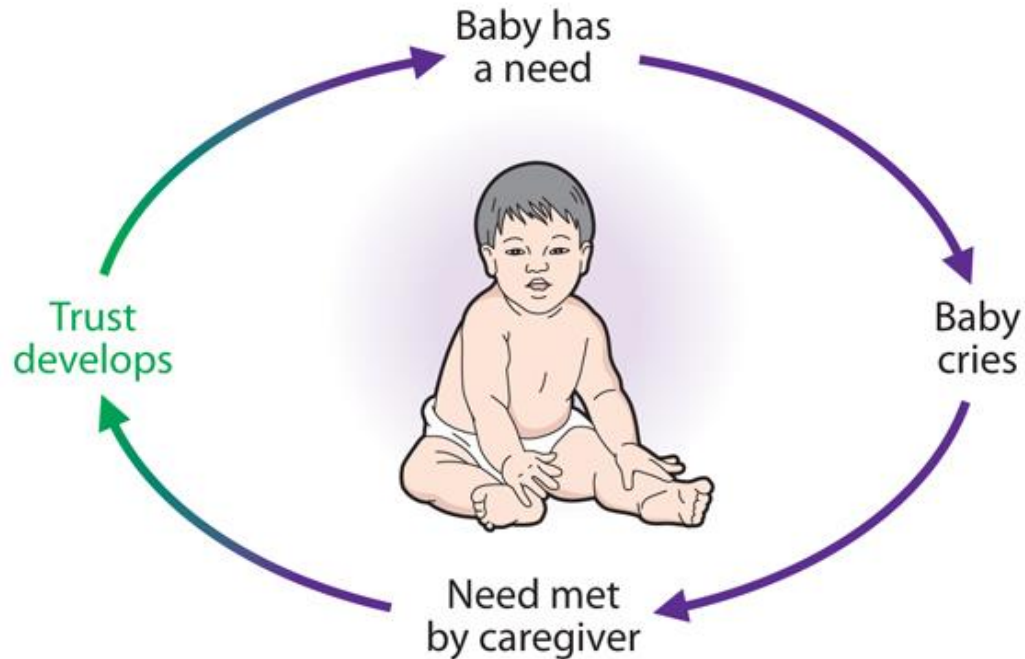
*It offers
consistency and
structure.*

*It helps children
identify adults who
can listen and
support their needs,
creating a safe and
trusting environment.*

*It gives a script which
all staff can use.*

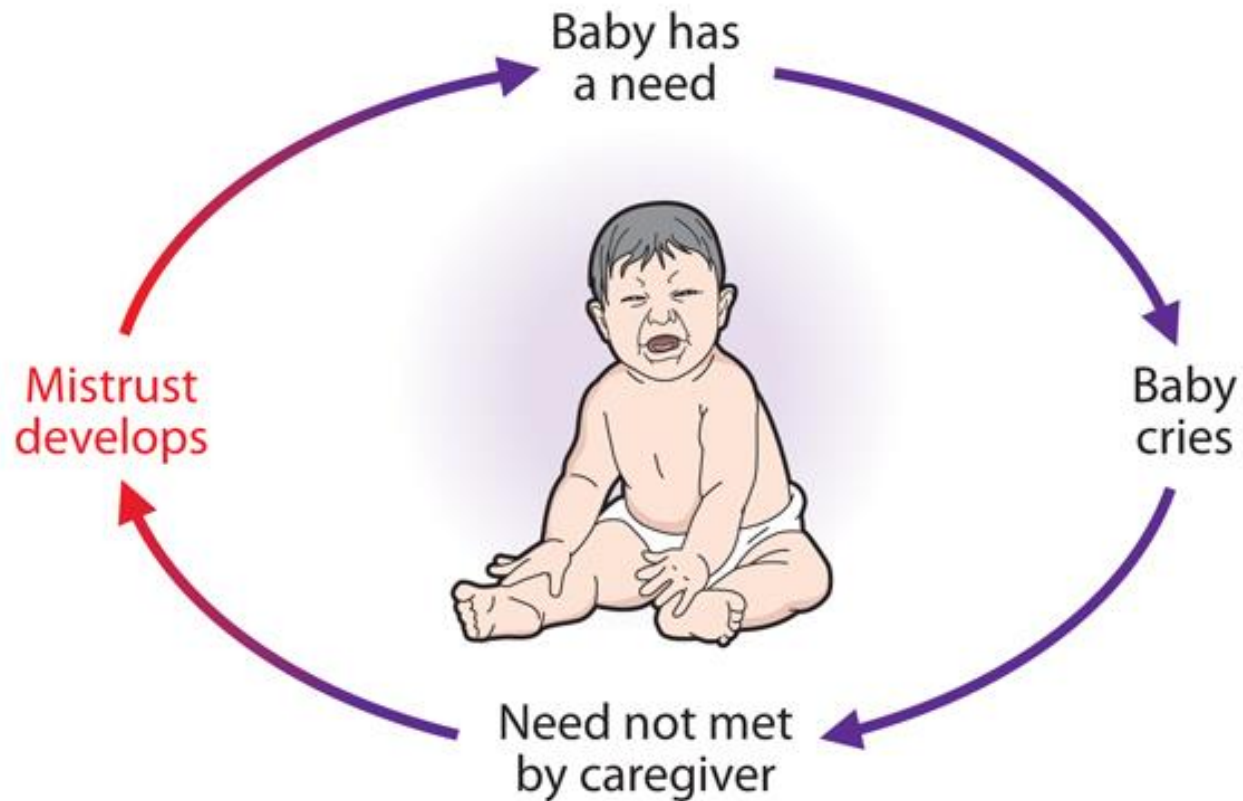
- Attachment difficulties
- Trauma
- Toxic stress
- Executive functions

Infant Attachment Cycle



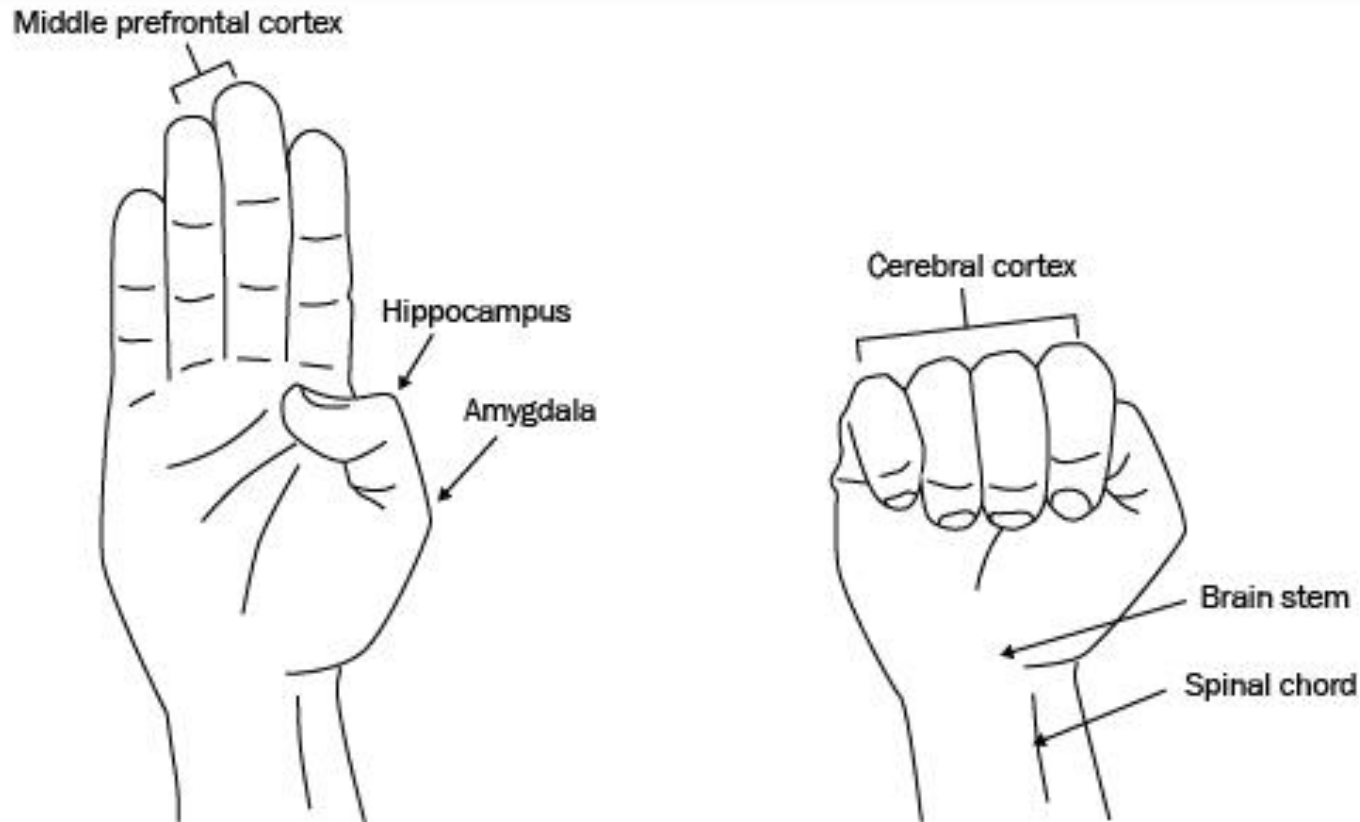
“Children who are regulated gradually learn to regulate themselves physiologically, emotionally, cognitively. They can think about and reflect on feeling. They become less reactive, less impulsive, more reflective, more thoughtful.”

Infant Trauma Cycle



- Abuse: physical/sexual/emotional
- Neglect
- Loss/separation
- Domestic violence
- Unpredictability
- Multiple moves

Use your hands to imagine your brain



If the “thinking brain” does not regulate the “emotional brain”, the primary emotions can dominate responses.

If we flip our lid...



Escalation

- adrenaline, cortisol, etc.
- rising blood pressure
- shallow breathing
- increased muscle tension

- The downstairs brain is in charge

SURVIVAL

De-escalation

- oxytocin, dopamine, etc.
- lowering blood pressure
- deeper breathing
- reduced muscle tension

- The upstairs brain is back in control

SAFETY

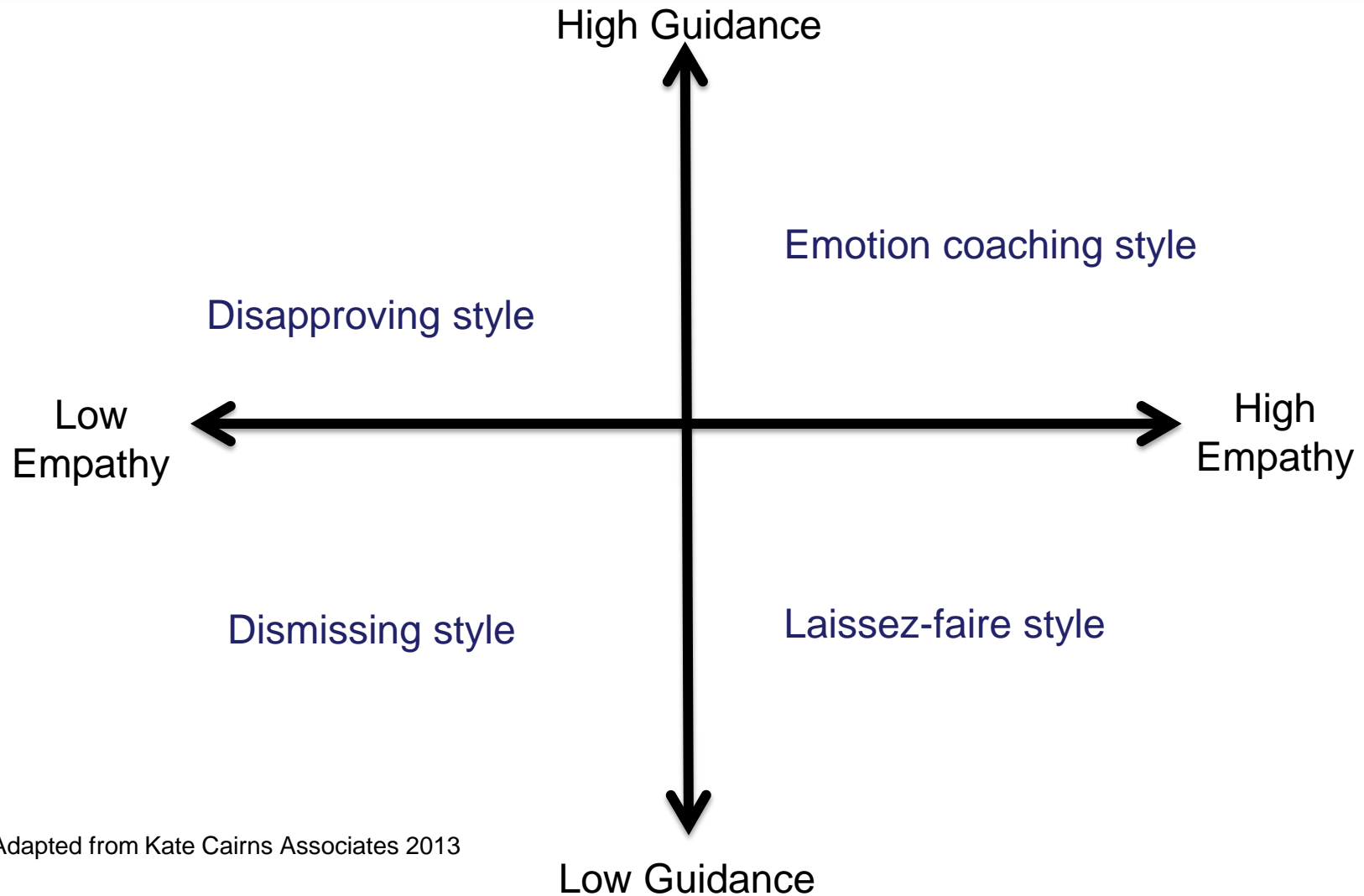
1. Inhibit
2. Emotional Control
3. Shift
4. Initiate
5. Working memory
6. Plan/organise
7. Organisation of materials
8. Monitor

- Attachment difficulties
- Trauma
- Toxic stress
- Executive functions

“..... may feel so anxious, distressed or angry that they cannot manage the urge to behave in anxious, distressed or angry ways.”

Gottman's research showed that emotion coached young people:

- Are more emotionally stable
- Are more resilient
- Achieve more academically
- Are more popular
- Have fewer behavioural problems
- Have fewer infectious illnesses



Adapted from Kate Cairns Associates 2013

Three steps to success:



1

Step 1

Empathise then label feelings



2

Step 2

Set limits on behaviour



3

Step 3

Problem-solve together

Step 1: empathise, validate and label

- Recognise all emotions as being natural and normal
- Look for physical and verbal signs of the emotion being felt
- Take on the student's perspective (attunement, mentalising)
- Use words to reflect back the student's emotion and help them to label the emotion
- Empathise, helping to calm down through co-regulation
- Provide a narrative for the emotional experience, creating cognitive links through co-learning

Step 2: set limits

Then teaching / co-learning

- State the boundary limits of acceptable behaviour
- Make it clear that some behaviours cannot be accepted

Step 3: problem-solve

- Explore the feelings that gave rise to the behaviour, problem, or incident
- Scaffold alternative ideas and actions that could lead to more appropriate and productive outcomes
- Empower the young person to believe they can overcome difficulties and manage their own feelings and behaviour

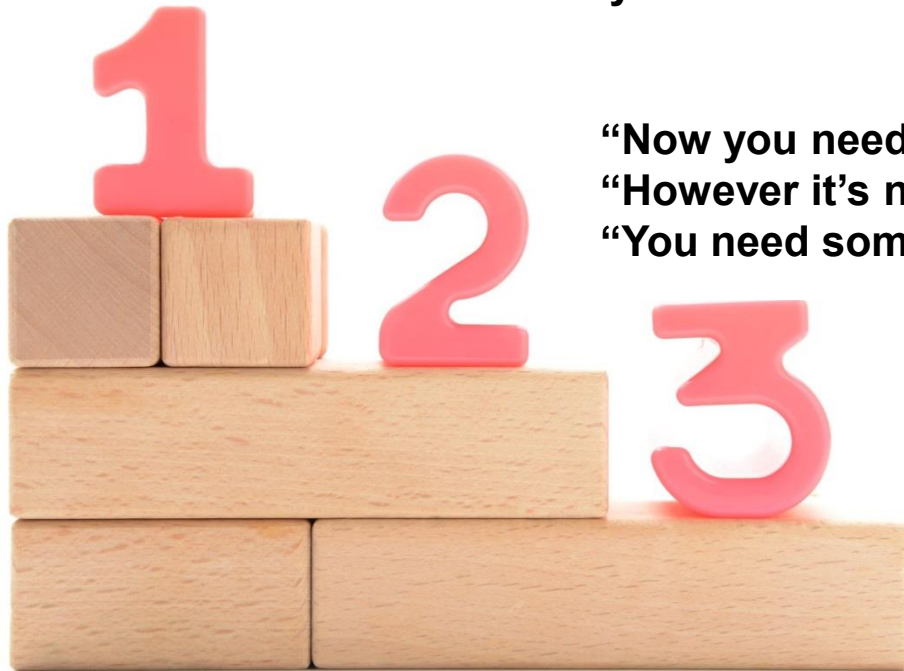
Emotion coaching script

“It looks like you are...”

“I can see that you are...”

“I wonder if you are feeling...”

“I understand that you are...”



“Now you need to...”

“However it’s not ok to...”

“You need some time to help you feel calm.”

“What could you do next time?”

“How can you avoid that situation?”

“How can you repair the situation?”

“What would stop this happening again?”

- Builds trusting and respectful relationships with young people
- Schools using an emotion coaching approach report increased well-being for staff as well as for pupils
- Less stress when dealing with incidents
- Improved response from young people next time
- Less likelihood of repetition of behaviour
- Improved mental health and wellbeing for all!

