

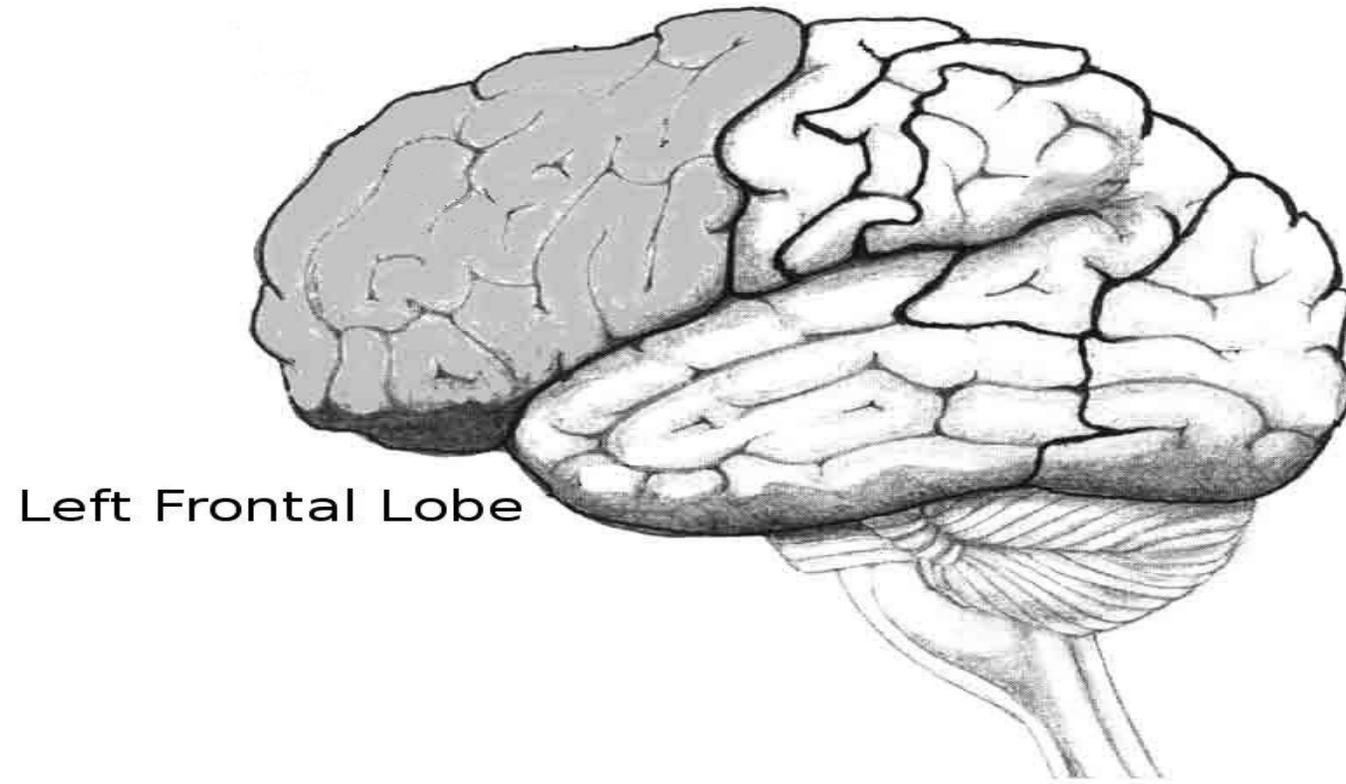
Helping Our More Vulnerable Kids: Supporting Kids with Executive Function and Anxiety Challenges

ADHD ESSENTIALS **PODCAST**

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Executive Function



Executive Function

Executive Function at it's most basic is a person's ability to execute. Their ability to do the thing.

Examples of When Executive Function is Needed

- Planning or decision making
- During error correction or trouble shooting
- When responses are not well-rehearsed or contain novel sequences of actions
- Dangerous or technically difficult situations
- When overcoming strong habitual response or resisting temptation

Executive Function is Developmental

- As kids develop, their executive functions grow stronger.
- We typically see significant growth in these areas during the middle and high school years, though often our expectations are greater than what they can actually do.
- Executive Functions don't fully lock in until our early twenties, and even then strategies can change and areas can improve or weaken based on use.

Elements of Executive Function

Thinking:

Working Memory

Planning / Prioritizing

Organization

Attention

Time Awareness

Metacognition

Persistence

Flexibility

Doing:

Response Inhibition

Emotional Control

Sustained

Task Initiation

Goal-directed

Supporting Executive Functions

Many executive functions are skills that can be developed and taught:

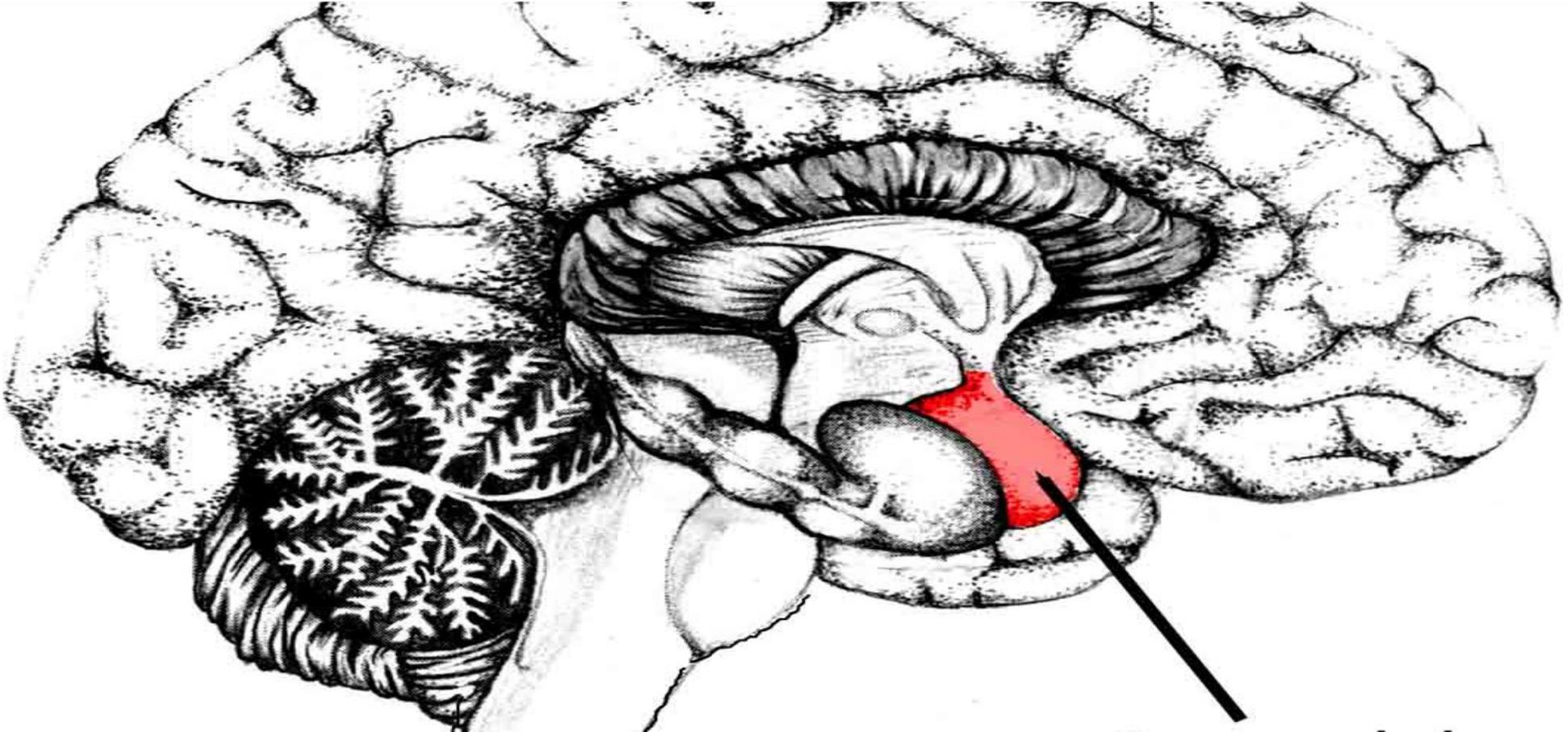
- Supporting kids in breaks tasks into manageable chunks (Planning & Prioritizing)
- Helping them clean & organize their room (Organization)
- Practicing mindfulness (Response Inhibition)
- Practicing mindfulness (Flexibility)
- Practicing mindfulness (Emotional Control)
- Reflecting on why things went the way they did (Metacognition)
- Reading (Sustained Attention)

Supporting Executive Functions

Once we reach the limits of what can be developed and taught, we can accommodate through strategies:

- Writing Things Down (Working Memory)
- Using Calendars (Time Awareness)
- Developing Systems and Structures (Planning & Prioritizing)
- Developing Systems and Structures (Working Memory)
- Developing Systems and Structures (Task Initiation)
- Using Timers (Task Initiation)
- Using Timers (Goal-Directed Persistence)
- Using Timers (Time Awareness)

Anxiety



What is Anxiety?

- Your body's natural response to stress. Fear or apprehension about what's going to happen. (The first day of school, trying out for a play, or presenting in front of the class, etc...)
- A normal, often useful, emotion that causes increased alertness, fear, and physical signs, such as a rapid heart rate, and shallow breathing.

What Causes Anxiety?

Uncertainty (Emotional)

Pressure to Perform

Lack of Control (the kid or the adult)

Failure (and the fear of it!)

The Anxiety of Others

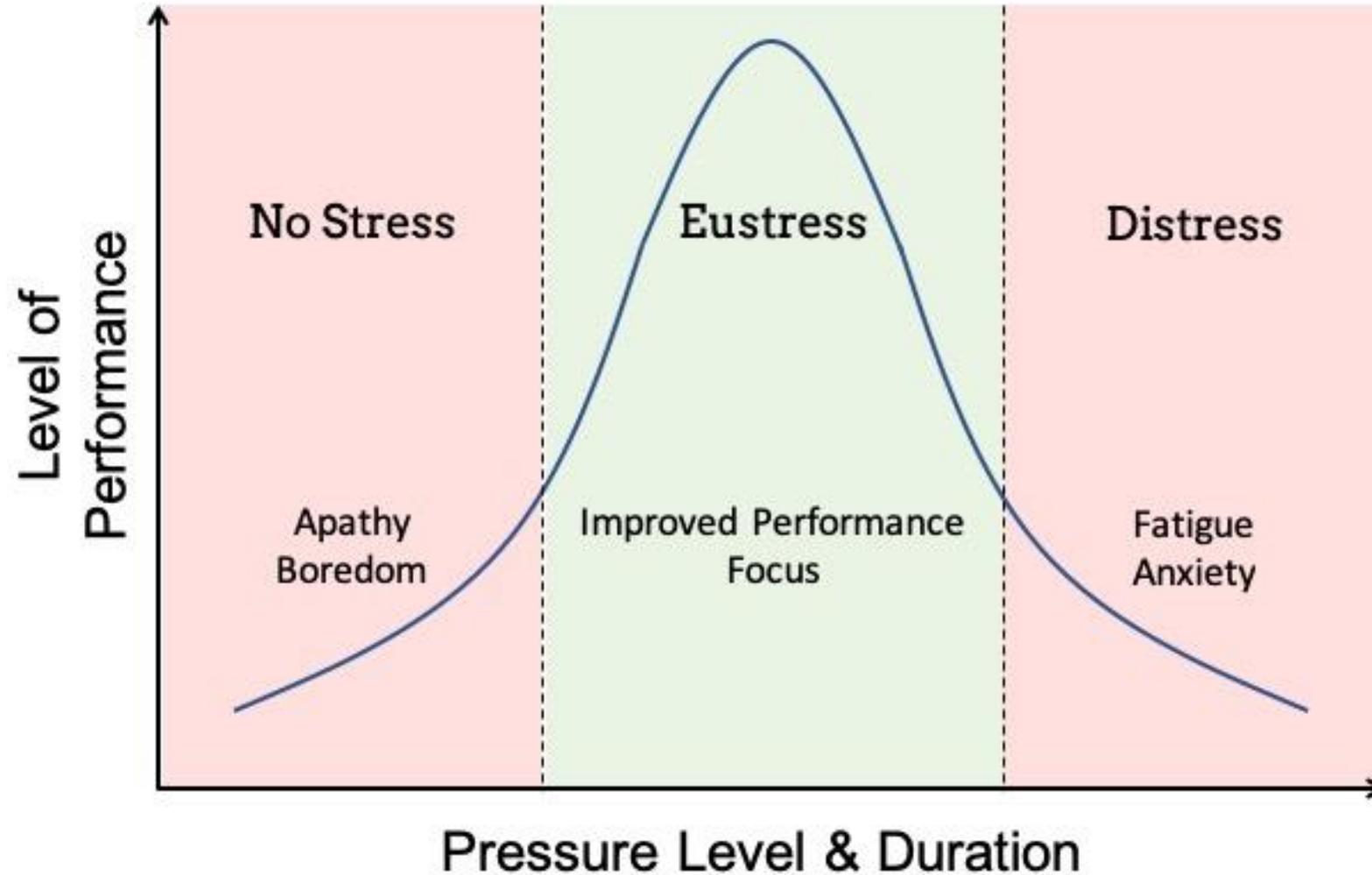
Uncomfortableness (Physical)

Soreness or Pain

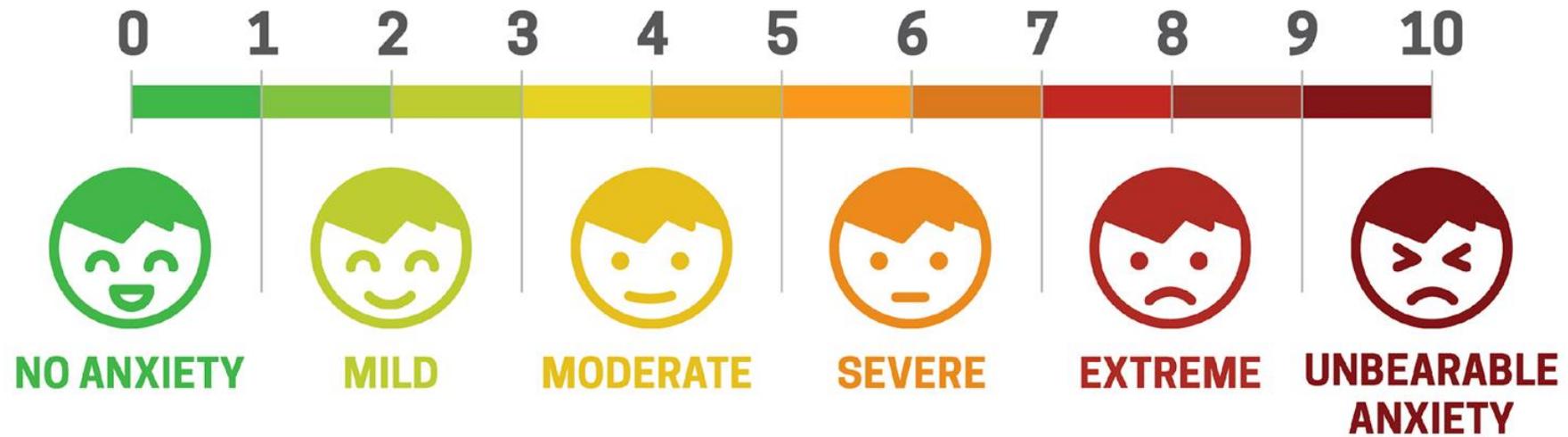
Allergies

Stimulant Use

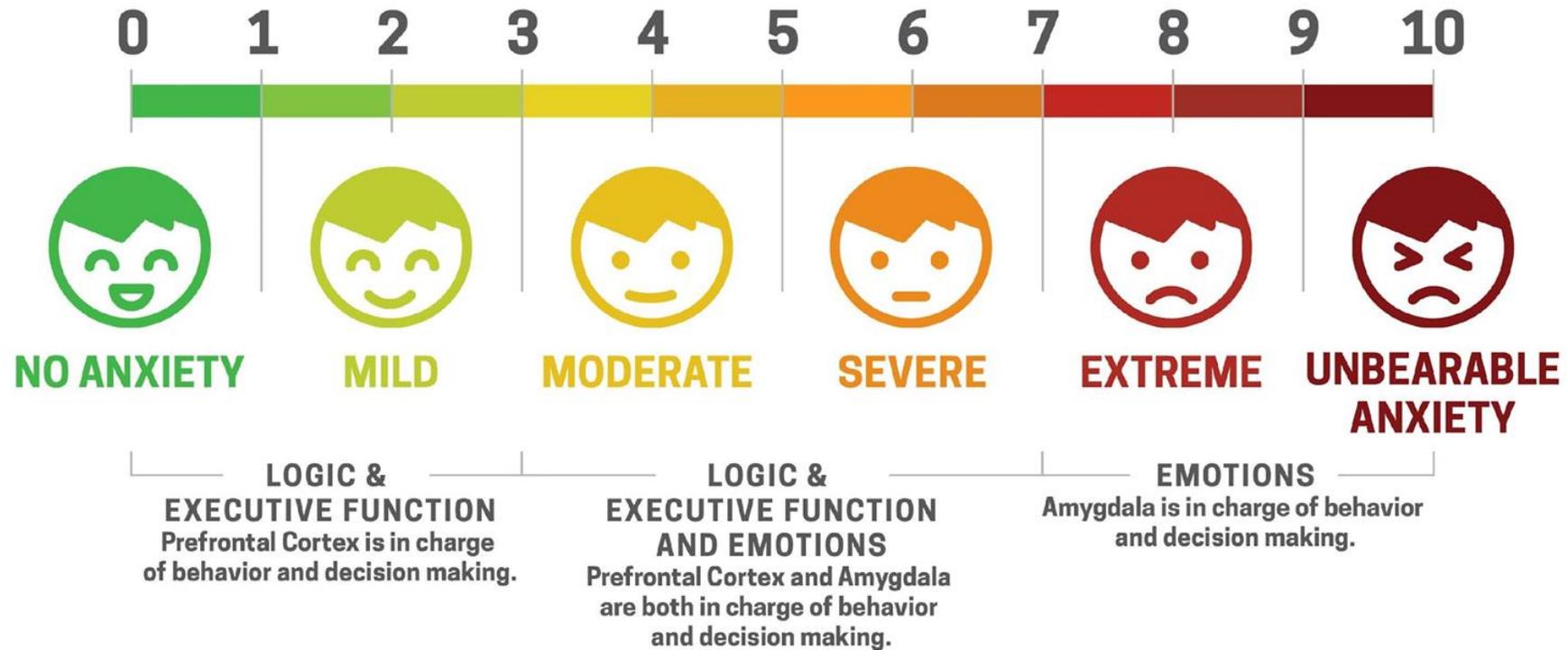
No Stress vs. Eustress vs. Distress



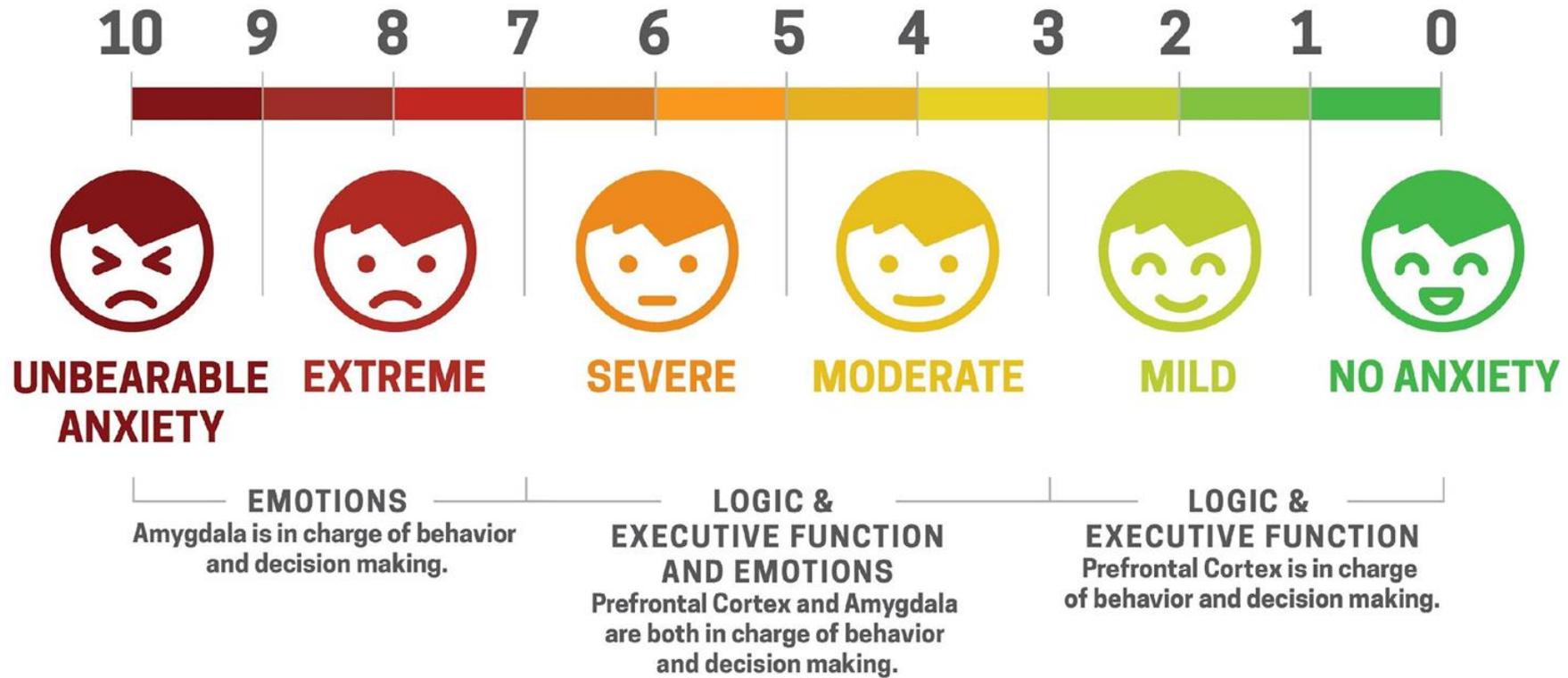
ESCALATION OF ANXIETY



ESCALATION OF ANXIETY



DE-ESCALATION OF ANXIETY



FULL SPECTRUM OF ANXIETY



FULL SPECTRUM OF ANXIETY



Parting Thoughts

- Kids do well when they can.
- Kids want to please the adults in their lives.
- When they aren't doing well, or aren't pleasing the adults in their lives, odds are that there is skillset that's missing.
- That missing skillset is likely to be connected to executive function challenges.
- As the adults in their lives, we can help break that cycle by leading with compassion, forgiveness, and understanding. (And then helping them develop the skills that they're missing or adjusting our expectations.)

Questions?

