



I feel incredibly privileged to be the recipient of one of the Kate O'Driscoll scholarships for 2018.

My association with Kate was rather short lived. I was, however, lucky to spend time with Kate and her Colleagues at the 2011 Reggio Conference in Canberra. It was there in Canberra that I learnt about Kate's enthusiasm for life, her endearing sense of fun and dedication to the best outcomes of our youngest students. We carried on a friendship after the conference. I know that she touched the lives of many Early Childhood Educators and I know that there are many school communities and educators that are incredibly grateful to Kate for her vision and leadership.

I chose to use this scholarship as an honour to her memory and to attend the 2018 ECA conference in Sydney where the theme was "Be the Difference for Children and Families". This conference name certainly says who Kate was to Catholic education in Tasmania.

This was an amazing conference with 2055 delegates in attendance and presenters from Interstate and overseas. In 2019 the Conference will be held in Hobart and I would urge all Principals to approve PD for their ECE to attend.- no airfares, no accommodation!! The knowledge I have gained in many areas has been invaluable and I will share this with my Colleagues at Dominic in a series of learning in Focus sessions at Staff meetings and will host Colleagues from other Catholic schools for a workshop early in 2019, which I will mention soon.

Whilst over the course of the 3 day conference I attended many wonderful sessions, this evening I have chosen to highlight the findings of one of the Keynote speakers, who was a delight to listen to and quite captivating, Dr Stuart

Shanker. **Dr. Stuart G. Shanker** is a research professor of Philosophy and Psychology at York University and the Founder/CEO of The MEHRIT Centre (TMC) in Canada. He is also the founder and Science Director of the Self-Regulation Institute (SRI), and an acclaimed author and international speaker. He is best known as Canada's leading expert in the psychophysiological theory of self-regulation.

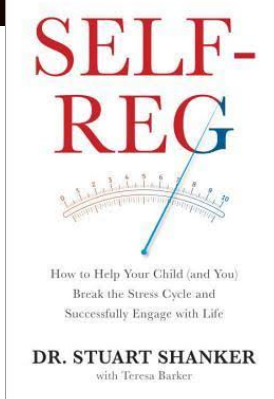
Key note Speaker

Self-Regulation and Internalizing/Externalizing problems

Dr Stuart Shanker- Plenary

Research professor from York University, Canada

- ECE = the secret to the survival of society
- By 8 yrs of age, patterns become entrenched
- There is no such thing as a bad, lazy kid, but we can make them that way.
- Neuroscience, neurobiology and psychology – sciences used to look more closely at brain development.
- In first 5 yrs, sub cortex development is vital. Affects how a child will respond to challenges, Once set they can be changed, but it is much harder.
- Easier to make changes in 0-6 when the brain is 'bursting'. Brain growth slows down at 6.5 yrs. $\frac{3}{4}$ of the adult brain is formed by then.
- Self-regulation is transforming our views of temperament, attachment and intelligence.
- When a child has stresses, the brain set brakes.
- When children develop healthy modes of self-regulation, they grow – cognitively, and socially.
- Every trajectory can be changed by working in self-regulation



- Self-regulation is how we manage stress – how efficiently a child deals with stressors and then recovers from these.
- Every time a child has a stressor, the brain responds with processors that consume energy- This is followed by restorative processors to recover from this energy expenditure.
- Over the past two decades, there has been a number of important discoveries in regards to children's stress:
 1. While some stress is highly motivating, too much stress can have a long-term negative effect.
 2. Too many children are dealing with too many stressors in their lives today.
 3. We need to develop a much better understanding of the nature of these stressors and how to reduce them.
 4. Children need to learn how to identify for themselves when they are becoming agitated and what they can do to return to being calm and focused.

So what exactly are these stressors? We all know that children are under a lot of pressure today and there is a lot of uncertainty in their lives. But scientists have been developing a much broader understanding of stress: of the sorts of things that activate the sympathetic nervous system, and just as important, the sorts of things that help a child's recovery. The five primary sources of stress in children's lives today are:

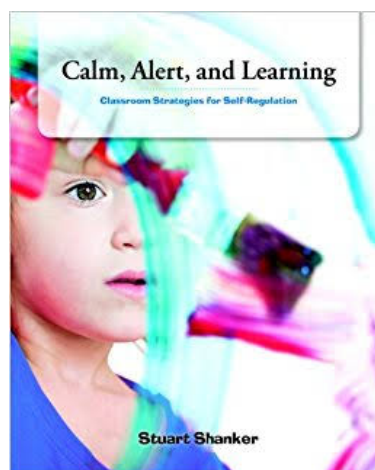
- 1. Biological
- 2. Emotional
- 3. Cognitive
- 4. Social
- 5. Prosocial
- Each of these levels influences and is influenced by all the others. So when working on a child's self-regulation we always have to be mindful that we are looking at all five levels, and not simply one or two. For a lot of children, too much noise or visual stimulation or strong smells can be a stressor. For some children, too much junk food or sugar can be a stressor. For far too many children today, not enough sleep or exercise or just playing with other children is a huge stressor. Many children struggle with strong negative emotions, like fear, anger, shame, or sadness. Some children find certain kinds of cognitive challenge very draining. A great many children

find group activities stressful. The physical environment can be a stressor: Pollution is a physiological stress and children are burning energy constantly to get rid of the toxins. In Mexico, due to the pollution levels, there are indications that the brain development of the 1 year old is comparable to a person with Alzheimer's. Finally, children can find it very challenging to have to deal with other children's feelings or needs.

- Education is a positive stressor that drives growth
- 0-5 yrs- stress behaviour is NOT misbehaviour
- We need to change the stress trajectories for children and explain this to Parents
- Learn the 5 steps to self-regulation – be kind to self. If overstressed you cannot teach. (handout)
- *You need to feel Calmness.*

"Calm, Alert and Learning" By Stuart Shanker

Session 1



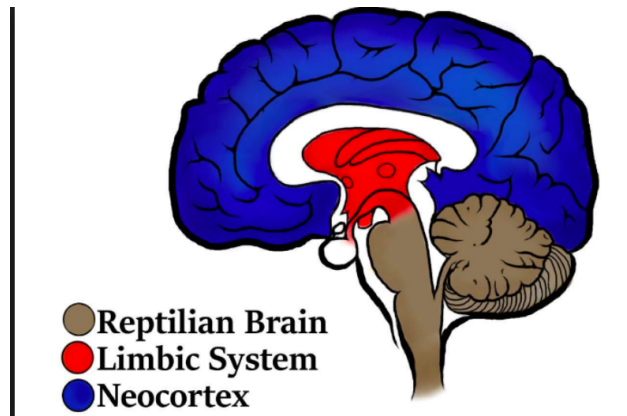
"The better we understand self-regulation, the better we can implement educational practices that enhance student's capacity to learn and develop the skills necessary to deal with life's challenges." –Dr. Stuart Shanker, in *Calm Alert and Learning*.

In recent years we have seen a revolution in educational thinking and practices. Scientific research in a number of fields is telling us that the key to student success is not so much intelligence but abilities like concentration, delay of gratification and emotional intelligence: abilities which are dependent on self-regulation.

- What is the most important thing that I can do as an educator to make the child receptive to learn?
- We need to make sure that the “red brain “and “blue brain” are in balance.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WYjbFkG4Ebk>

- The brain is working best when the red brain (limbic system) and the blue brain (neocortex) are in harmony. The brown brain (primitive or reptilian brain) is the flight and fright receptor of the brain.



- When a child displays not appropriate behaviours , this is due to stresses and indicative that the red and blue brain are not balanced
- The **red brain** has its own neuroceptors. It scans our environment for friend or foe. It uses sound and kicks the reptilian brain into action for flight or fright. The heart rate rises and the child is ready to take off. In this state, all energy burns off.
- The **blue brain** evolved in humans and this is where the sophisticated cognitive strengths and self-awareness is formed

- When a child goes into flight or fright, the blue brain is turned off, There is no thinking taking place, no deciding and irrational behaviour. The child will regress to a pre-social state. Often they use a high pitch voice which is indicative of a limbic utterance. The most important thing for the child is their sense of connection – safety and security. A child cannot learn anything when the reptilian brain has been



Stuart Shanker
@StuartShanker

"When a kid loses it and is in red brain, the things that will bring them back to blue brain are the same things that would have soothed them in infancy."



engaged. Between the ages of birth to 5, the flight or fright function in the brain cannot be turned off. If there are too many stressors, it becomes kindled and the pattern set. It is our job to figure out what the stressors are on the child (the **Why** they are behaving like they are?) It is also our job to reduce the stressors and teach the child how to reduce them for themselves. (the **How?**)

- A generational trajectory can be changed. The signs are there and progress can always happen. It can't be done alone. We all have to work together for the good of our children.

Statement on Young Children and Digital technologies – ECA launch

Thursday 20th September, 2018

Whilst at the Conference, ECA launched its Statement on Young Children and Digital technologies.

The Statement, developed in consultation with the sector and under the guidance of ECA's Digital Policy Group, provides an evidence base from which educators can make decisions regarding digital technologies that are relevant and sensitive to the digital contexts experienced by children and their families.



Early Childhood Australia
Statement on young children
and digital technologies

The Statement on young children and technologies supports the early childhood education and care sector, children, families, decision-makers and technology developers to understand technology use with and for young children.

This Statement provides an overview of existing research about young children and digital technologies in four known areas of importance in early childhood education:

1. Relationships
2. Health and wellbeing
3. Citizenship
4. Play and pedagogy.

Each area canvassed in this Statement is accompanied by a guiding principle and 'practice advice' intended to facilitate professional reflection on the role and optimal use of digital technologies with, by and for young children, according to the digital contexts in which young children, their families and educators play, live and work.

<http://www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/our-work/submissions-statements/eca-statement-young-children-digital-technologies/>

It is my intention that in Early 2019, we will run a workshop at Dominic College for other ECE to come along, explore, and share their stories, practice, successes, delights and dilemmas with digital technologies. We will look at the practice advice and see what is applicable to each of us in our own settings. This will be a wonderful opportunity for collegial sharing and support as we investigate the many digital contexts. During the workshop, I am hoping that discussions will help unfold the impact of technologies on young children and the issues of young children's education, development, health, wellbeing and safety, and parenting. We will focus on our use of/exposure to, interactive technology, media and online environments for our youngest students. The date of this workshop will be sent out to all Catholic Primary schools in the near future and I am hoping that you will encourage your ECE staff to come along for afternoon tea and some collegial sharing with me at Dominic College.

In closing, Thank you so much for listening.

I am very grateful for the opportunity to have attended the Conference in Sydney. I would like to acknowledge that I am privileged and blessed to work with the most sacred people on earth – children, and I hope that by us all working together, we can all make a positive difference to allow them to become the best and most honest citizens they can be.