



Parent Guide: How to Support Your Child in OCD Treatment

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Intro & Goals

1. Attendees will examine the many reasons ERP, as a concept, may be counterintuitive to a loving parent.
2. Describe the various emotions a child may experience and project towards the parent in reaction to ERP.
3. Discuss dynamics in relationships between parents and young adults in treatment.
4. Present strategies to help parents reframe their concept of anxiety and distress tolerance resulting in improved parent "buy-in."

The Challenge



- ERP is the gold-standard treatment for OCD, but it can be challenging for parents. Seeing your child in distress, much less creating situations to increase anxiety may be counterintuitive to a caring, compassionate parent.
- This workshop will define the challenge and describe strategies to resolve the conflict for the parent. We will help parents reframe attitudes toward anxiety and provide support for parents involved in treatment. Through reframing and discussing tips, parents will have an increased "buy into" ERP treatment.

Brief Description of ERP

- ERP involves exposing (exposure) yourself to situations that lead to distress and while in that situation, refraining from engaging in compulsions (response prevention).
- Exposures allow individuals the opportunity to practice tolerating emotions, rather than engaging in avoidance or compulsions.
- Through these experiences, individuals learn to disconfirm their expectations and build confidence.

Our Roles as Loving Parents



Provision

Provide shelter, food, clothing



Protection

Protect from harm, danger, threat and associated negative emotions, ensure survival



Support

Support positive experiences, emotions- reduce impact of negative experiences or emotions



Teach and Guide

Provide education, direction, recommendations, instruction, how-tos



Supervision and Control

Discipline, limits, boundaries, moral development

A Mentoring Parent

- A mentoring parent doesn't prevent all negative experiences or consequences but strives to teach children how to handle them.



What is Resilience?

- The capacity to recover from or adapt to difficulties (negative experiences and associated emotions) and spring back into shape.
- The process and outcome of successfully adapting to challenging life experiences (both external and internal) through:
 - Mental
 - Emotional
 - Behavioral

flexibility and adjustment.

Happiness and Resilience

- Studies in happiness show a direct and strong correlation to degrees of resilience.
 - The higher the resilience, the higher the overall life satisfaction and contentment



Recognizing and Accepting the Conflict

We want our children to achieve the highest level of happiness and contentment in their lives (i.e., high levels of resilience)

Yet

We want to protect them from **ALL** negative experiences and associated negative emotions

And

One must have negative experiences and associated negative emotions to develop resilience to them



Recognizing and Accepting the Conflict



Protection and Support

vs.



Resilience and Happiness

Speedbumps in Accepting Our Conflict

I, as a parent:

- May be scared of negative thoughts, bad things happening, contamination or illness, too
- Just can't stand the thought of my misery when my child is scared
- Want to avoid my child being angry at me and how that makes me feel
- Don't want to alienate my child or lose their affection
- Want to avoid the guilty feelings of my child blaming me of being mean or a bad parent

The image features a teal background. A large white semi-circle is positioned on the right side. On the left side, there is a dark teal circle. Above this circle, there are several short, dark teal dashes arranged in an arc. The text "Skill helps us resolve the conflict!" is written in a black, sans-serif font, centered within the white semi-circle.

Skill helps us resolve
the conflict!



ERP is About Teaching the Brain

“I used to think that the brain was the most wonderful (smartest and best) organ in my body. Then I realized who was telling me this.”

- Emo Phillips



Unknown → Known

- The two columns in the brain
- The expanse of the unknown
 - 10x the Milky Way

THE UNKNOWN

?

?

WHAT IF



The Unknown and What if?

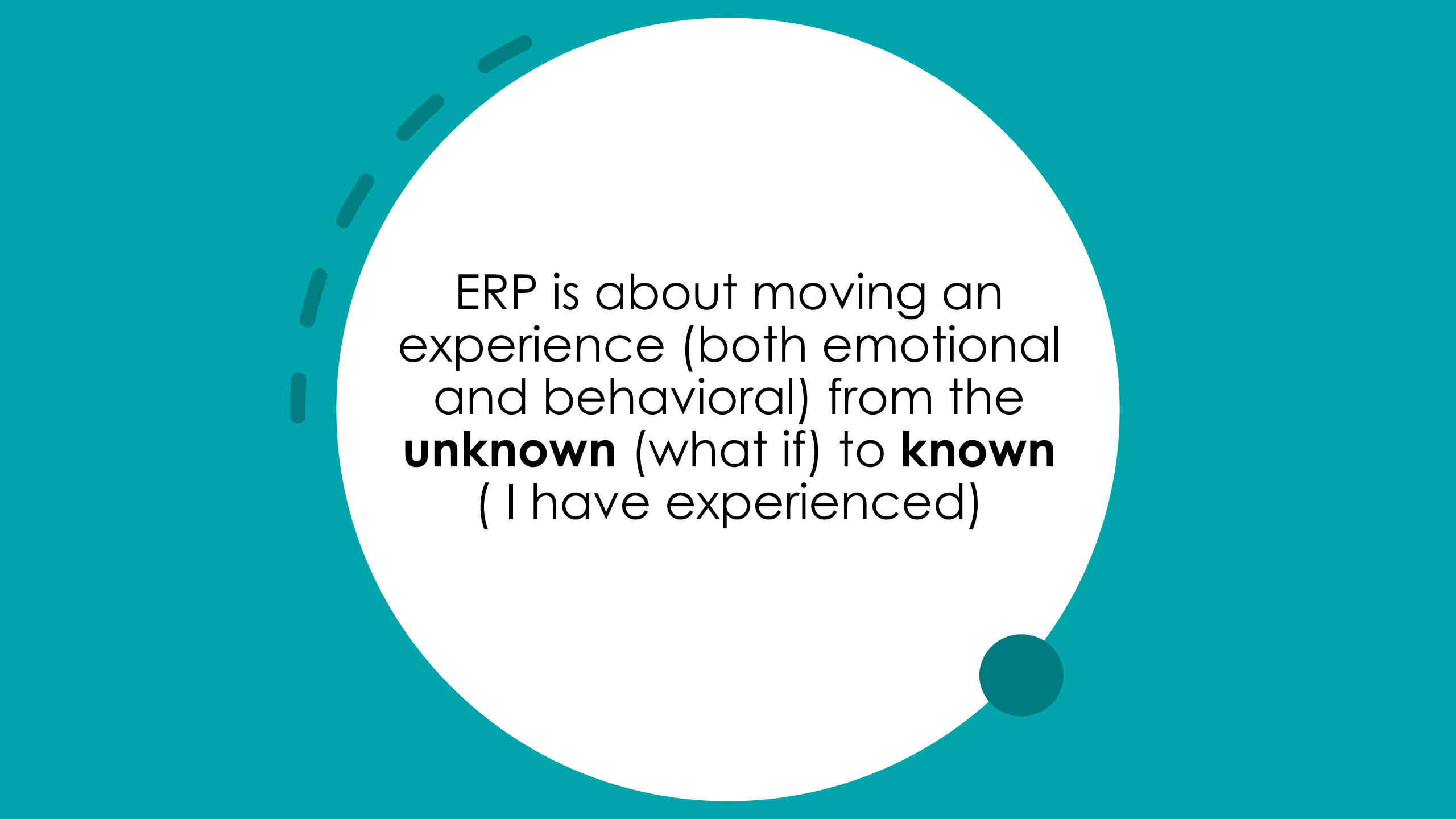
- All the scary “what ifs” are possible
- You cannot argue with the unknown
- Function of survival
- Features anxiety and other negative emotions

The Known

The known is what we have experienced

- Experience shrinks the unknown
- Shrinks the “what ifs” considerably
- Provides layers of confidence
- Reduces anxiety






ERP is about moving an
experience (both emotional
and behavioral) from the
unknown (what if) to **known**
(I have experienced)

Unknown → Known

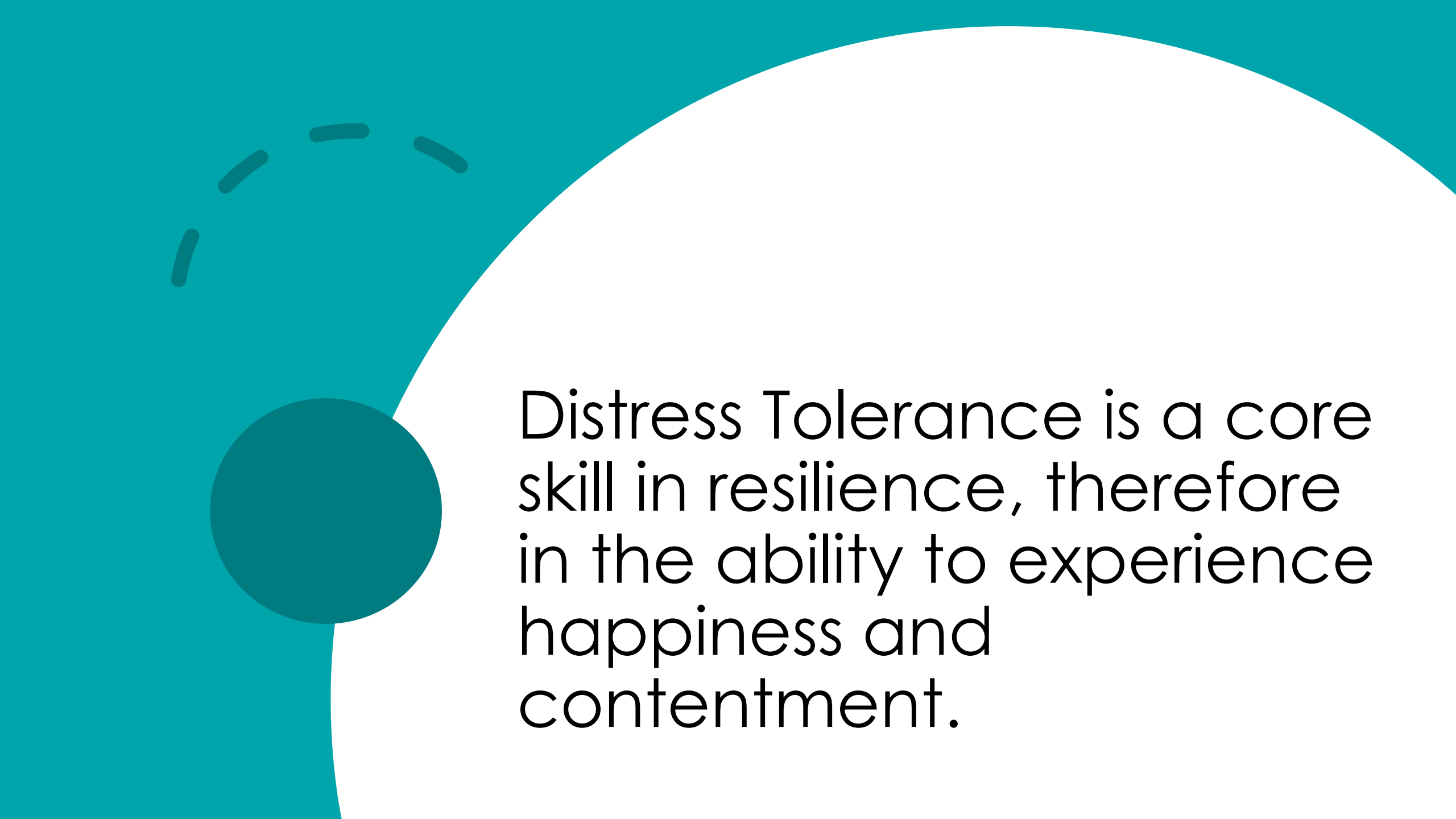
- The two columns in the brain
- The expanse of the unknown and “what ifs”
- ERP moves unknown to known
- The brain learns important information and skill



What is Distress Tolerance (DT)?



The skill of being able to manage or tolerate a negative emotional experience without feeling overwhelmed by it. It is being able to handle difficult emotions and return more quickly to a state of equilibrium when new stressors arise.

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Distress Tolerance is a core skill in resilience, therefore in the ability to experience happiness and contentment.



The overall goal of ERP is to increase Distress Tolerance.



Isn't the overall goal of ERP
to reduce anxiety?

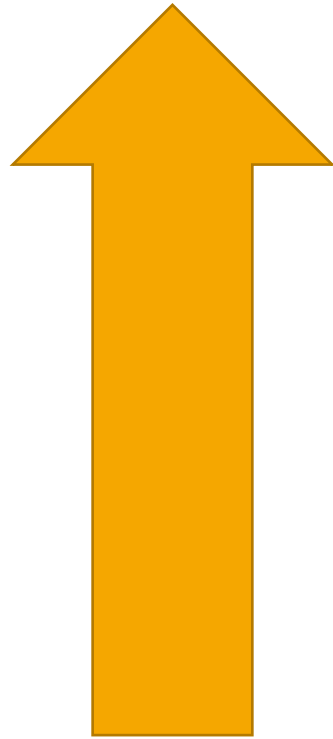


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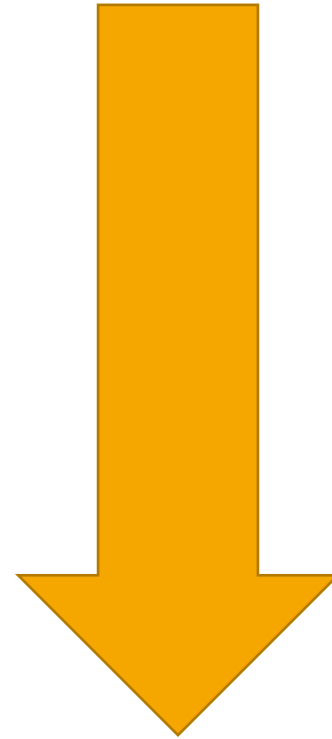


However, when you increase distress tolerance, a side effect is that anxiety is usually lowered.

Distress Tolerance vs. Anxiety



Distress
Tolerance
Increases



Anxiety
Decreases

ERP is About Teaching the Brain

- New threat appraisal

The Threat Equation

$$\text{Threat} = \frac{\text{Risk}}{\text{Skill}}$$

So, when you learn skill, you reduce the threat!

Analogies for Threat Equation



Driving in the rain



Having strong knees



Giving presentations



Rock Climbing

Payoffs for Increased Distress Tolerance through ERP

Increases in

- Independence
 - Dignity
 - Integrity
- Self-reliance
- Self-efficacy
- Self-confidence
- Willingness to grow, explore, learn
- Healthy pride (self value)

ERP never stops paying dividends!

The increase in distress tolerance extends to every corner of your life.



The Child's Reaction to ERP

Emotional Reactions to ERP Practice

- Procrastination
- Projecting anger or blame at parents
 - For having OCD
 - For doing ERP practice
 - For feeling negative emotions
- Crying, sobbing, yelling
- Threatening
- Refusal/Shut down

The Parents Reaction to ERP Practice

- Be prepared for strong emotion
- Solidify your own resolve and recognize the conflict
- When possible present a united front
- Project confidence and strength
- Watch your own expressed emotional level

Parents as Coaches

Remember to validate emotions in a reflective way and not content. Your goal is to hit the core with the ERP which is the negative emotion.



Parents as Coaches and Motivators

- 1) Be a cheerleader-notice and applaud improvement. Don't dwell on failures or what still needs to be done.
- 2) Be supportive but not reassuring.
- 3) Don't undermine exposures by questioning them.
- 4) When possible, do the exposure yourself. However, do this only with permission, and don't do more.
- 5) Encourage completing planned exposure goals, but don't nag or push for more to be done.
- 6) Point out the slips you notice. Be gentle, not aggressive, when encouraging the sufferer to keep doing the program.
- 7) Don't try to become the "anti-OCD police." It won't work.



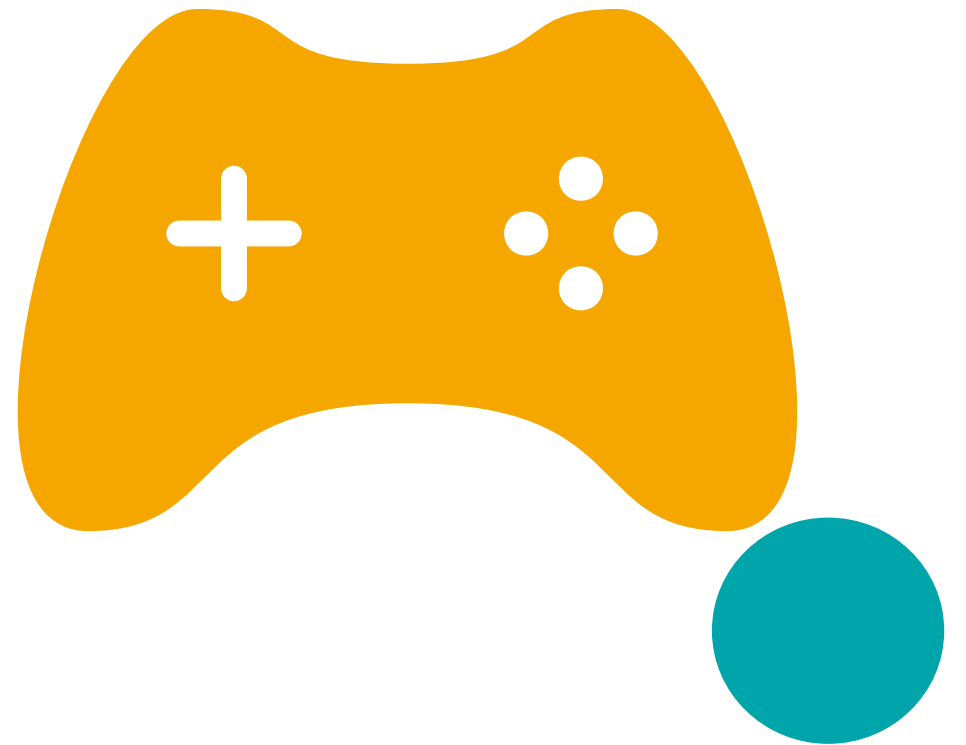
Parents as Coaches Helping in Motivation

Explain the process of ERP using
analogies rather than personal
payoff

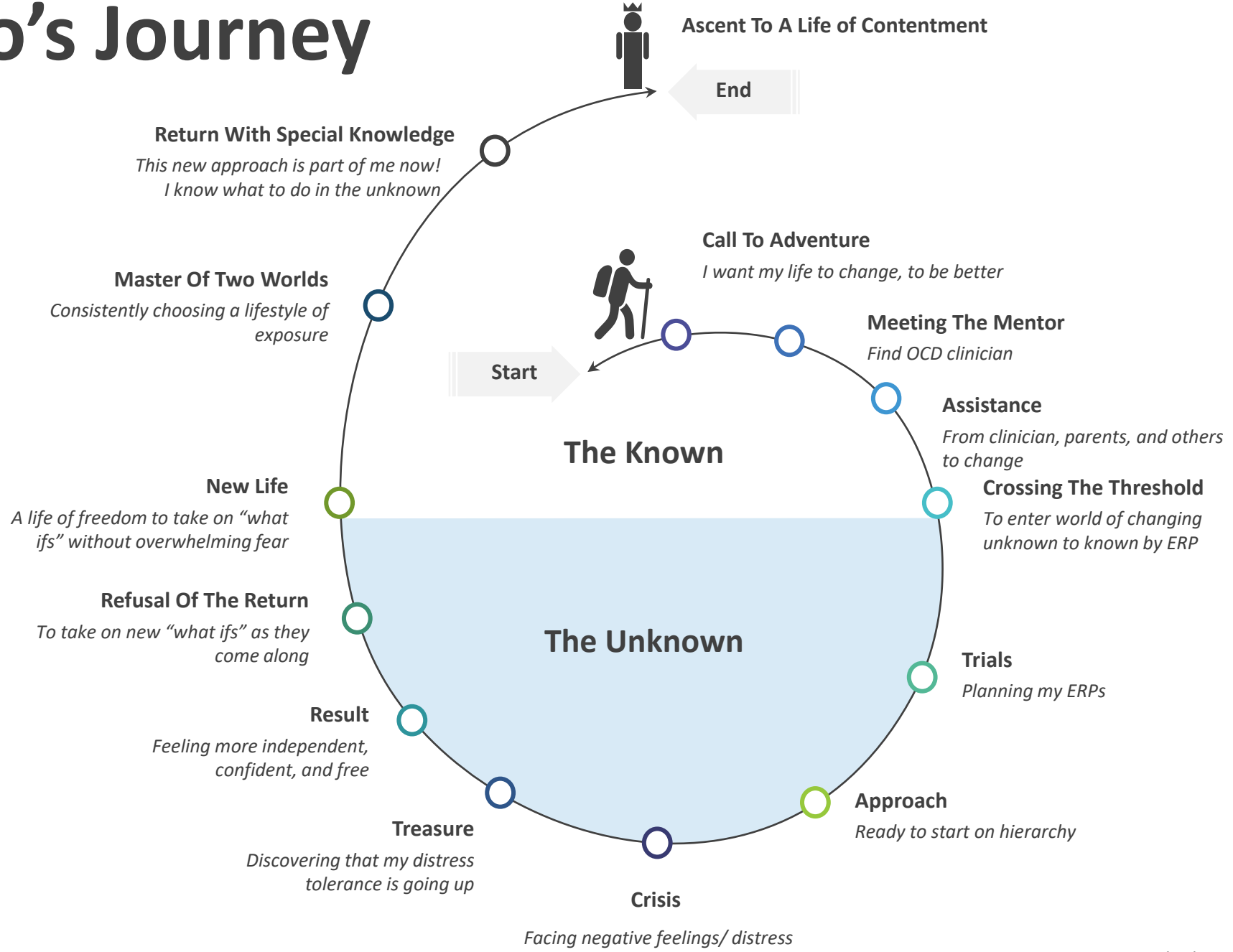


The Hero's Journey

The concept is a template for both story design and designing video games. This is a great way to help your teen think about ERP practice!



The Hero's Journey





Parents as Coaches

- Helping in motivation
 - The Hero's Journey
 - Make a plan with the help of your therapist or using ERP Guidelines
- 

Exposure and Response Prevention Guidelines

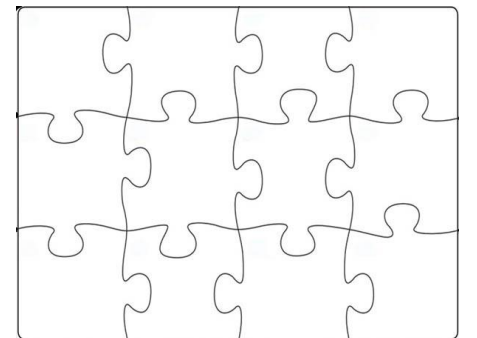
- Prepare support materials, including therapy scripts, script cards, red-dot labels (small quarter-inch self-sticking labels that you can use as reminders and prompts).
- Put aside at least an hour a day to do your exposure work.
- When you start doing exposures, start with something you will do, rather than trying to do something you might fail at.
- Always follow through with the safe steps!
- Use all of your allotted exposure time.
- Listen to imaginal exposure scripts as constantly as you can.
- When urges to ritualize following exposure feel overwhelming, consider doing more exposure. If this feels too difficult, consider using Distraction and Refocusing to delay your ritualizing.

Parents as Coaches

- Helping in motivation
 - The Hero's Journey
- Make a plan with the help of your therapist or using ERP Guidelines
- Setting up Games and Challenges makes the ERP a little more **fun!**

Parents as Coaches

- Helping in motivation
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- Make a plan with the help of your therapist or using ERP Guidelines
- Setting up Games and Challenges makes the ERP a little more **fun!**
- Include Rewards
 - Internal Rewards
 - Internal consolidation or accomplishments as virtue
 - Parents help with verbal praise and acknowledgment
 - External Rewards
 - Reward puzzles
 - Point Systems
 - What about money?



Payoffs for Increased Distress Tolerance through ERP

Increases in

- Independence
 - Dignity
 - Integrity
- Self reliance
- Self efficacy
- Self confidence
- Willingness to grow, explore, learn
- Healthy pride (self value)




Summary

ERP can be challenging for parents. There is an innate conflict in purposefully engaging in an activity designed to increase anxiety and discomfort and removing discomfort as an act of compassion.

Thankfully, our dilemma can be answered by the development of skills to increase resilience to distress and result in a happier more self-confident child and adult.



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**Can we get your
“Buy In” on ERP?**

References

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