

Bushfires, Power Struggles & Mind Struggles

Defusion techniques that engage
and enable parents to effectively respond
to childhood behavioural problems

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Workshop Aims

- Demonstrate a technique for working with Cognitive Fusion experienced by parents
- Demonstrate Defusion techniques that enable parents to employ broader and more flexible and mindful approaches to assisting their children through stressful moments
- Inspire your clinical practice?!

A Bit of Context

The following techniques are used in the Confident Carers-Cooperative Kids (CCCK) Program which is a 9 week ACT guided parenting program created by Greg & Mark (2006-2013).



CENTRAL THEME

*How can we engage with parents
who have complex lives and feel
so emotionally burdened?*

*What words come to mind when
parents describe their experience
of dealing with their child's
"unmanageable" behaviours?*

Noticing the Struggle

THOUGHTS & IMAGES

*I'm a bad parent It's impossible
Does it on purpose to hurt me
I can't cope*

RED

Tired

Tense

Guilty

Helpless

BODY SENSATIONS

Exhausted

FEELINGS

Hopeless

Give up

Angry

Overwhelmed

Shout

Yell

Jump in and make assumptions

Smack

ACTIONS



Aaron

Aaron's Parents' Struggle

THOUGHTS & IMAGES

BODY SENSATIONS

FEELINGS

ACTIONS

Theory Behind the Practice

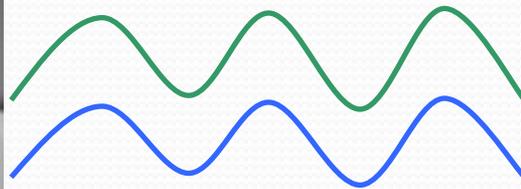
- Identifying the 'Mind Struggle' helps parents to sit with the difficult thoughts and feelings that they would usually try to avoid – it is part of a Creative Hopelessness process.
- Getting The Struggle out of their Minds and onto the page begins a process of Defusion – it helps parents to take a step back and notice their thoughts and feelings (mindfully) rather than react or respond to them automatically.
- Through repeated contact with the 'Mind Struggle' during different stages of the program, parents are more able to notice when they are caught up in a Mind Struggle, and then step back.

...How can we help parents to find a way
through the layers of hurt, anger, guilt,
shame, helplessness, hopelessness, fear...
...to re-discover what is most important?
...and to re-connect with 'the parent they
want to be'?

Engagement



- Getting in contact with The Struggle
- RH – RH : Images, videos, metaphors, experiential exercises
- Keeping them in Mind : Holding
- Wavelength : Tuning in



Child

Parent

Guided Mindfulness Exercise

...imagine that you have recently found out that you are expecting your first child...(long pause). Take a moment to bring yourself back to this moment in time. You probably made some open or private promises to yourself about how things will be in your family... What it is that you ideally want for your baby,... The kind of parent you want to be for your child... How you want to be remembered by your child when they grow up... The qualities you want to show as a parent ... What you want to stand for as a parent...



Becoming Aware Of Your Parenting Values

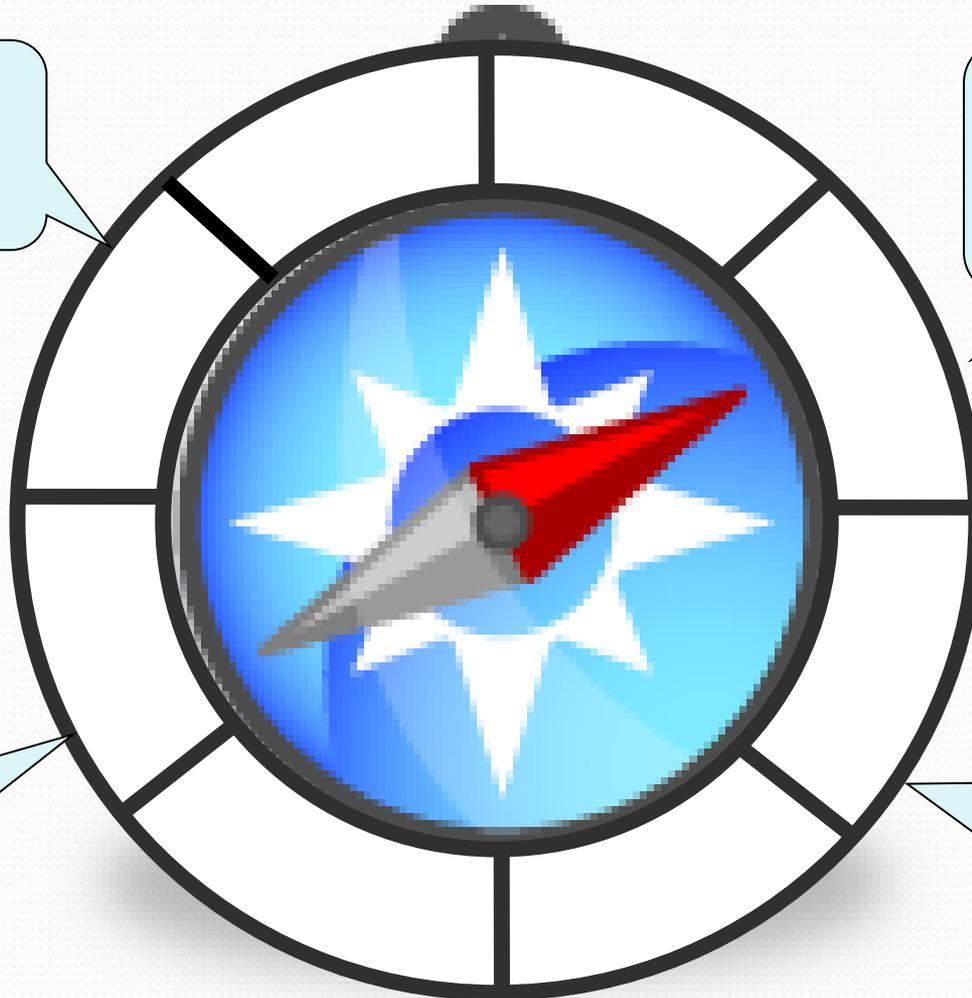
“My Parenting Compass - What’s Most Important”

Q. What kind of a parent do you want to be for your child?

Q. How do you want to be remembered by your child when they grow up?

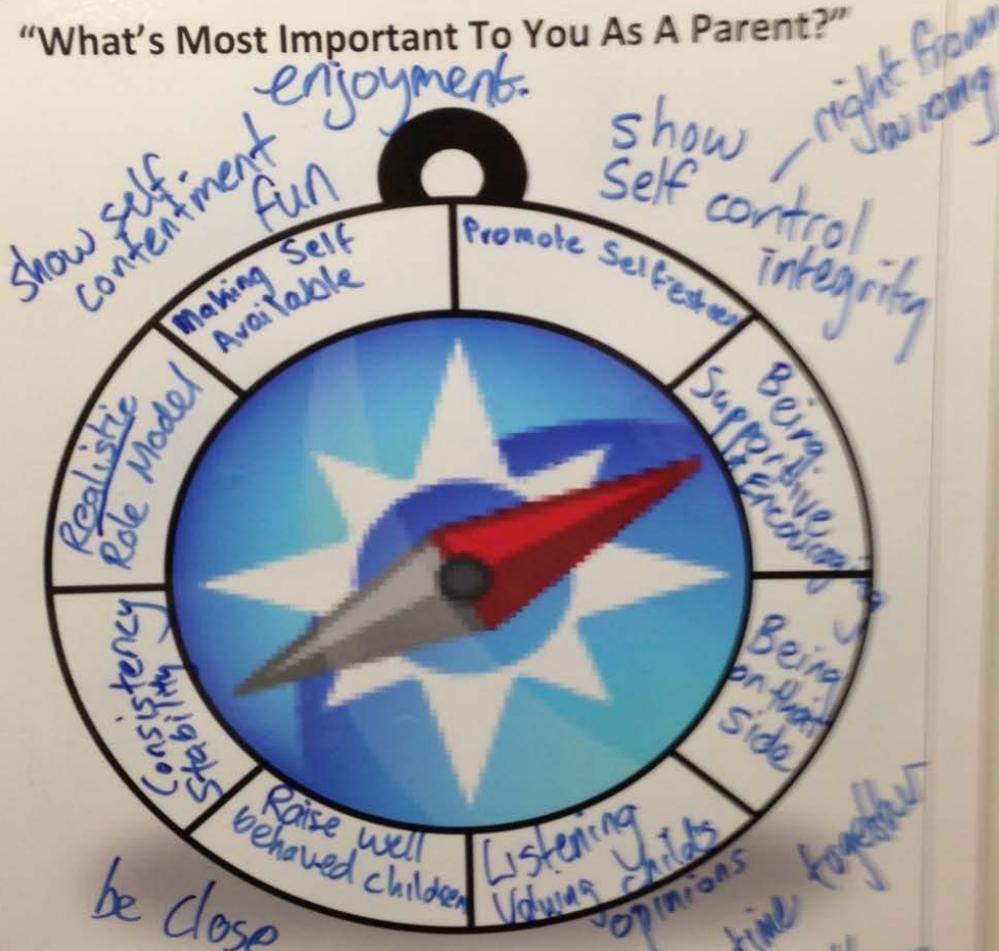
Q. What qualities do you want to show?

Q. What do you want to stand for as a parent?



PARENTING COMPASS

"What's Most Important To You As A Parent?"



Write the Values in the segments around the compass

show respect

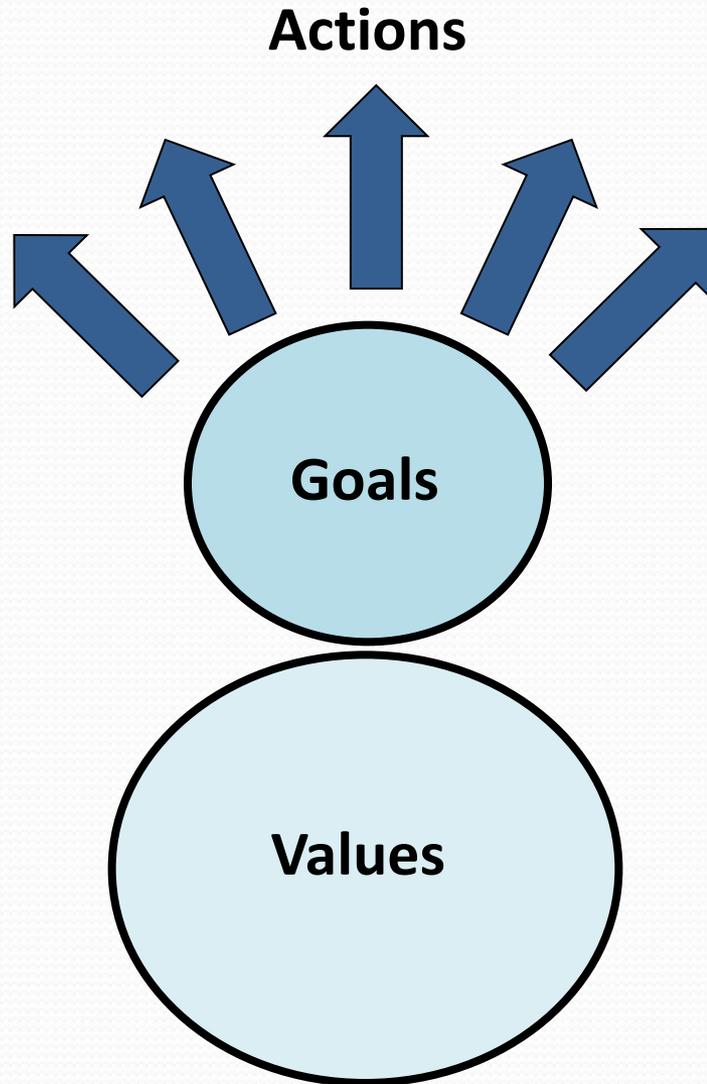
openness

CONFIDENT CAREERS - COOPERATIVE KIDS

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time together
being there for children no matter what

Values – Goals - Actions



“Actions are the specific behaviours we perform to achieve our goals”



“A Goal is a specific achievement we accomplish in the service of a particular Value”



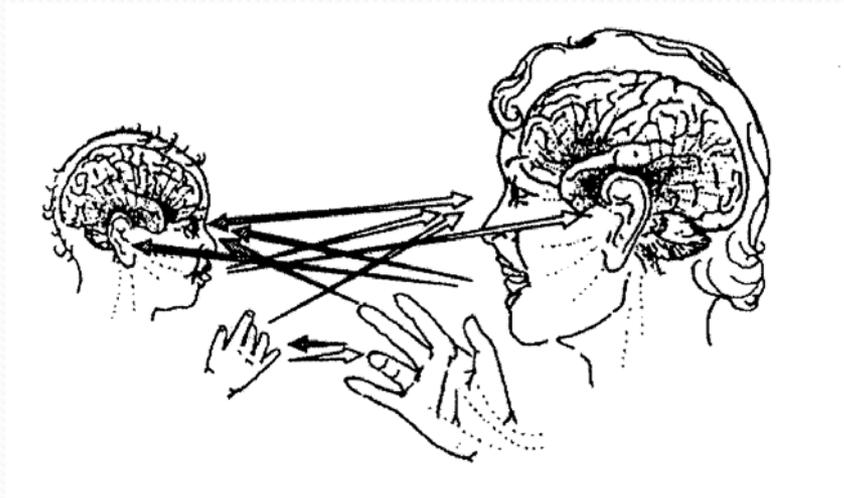
“A Value is something important to us that we head towards in life – a direction”

*“Take yourself back to when you’d just had your baby
...how did your baby try to communicate with you?”*



Grounding parents in pre-verbal relating

"...we leave an imprint in their brains"



*Mindful Play
Engagement*

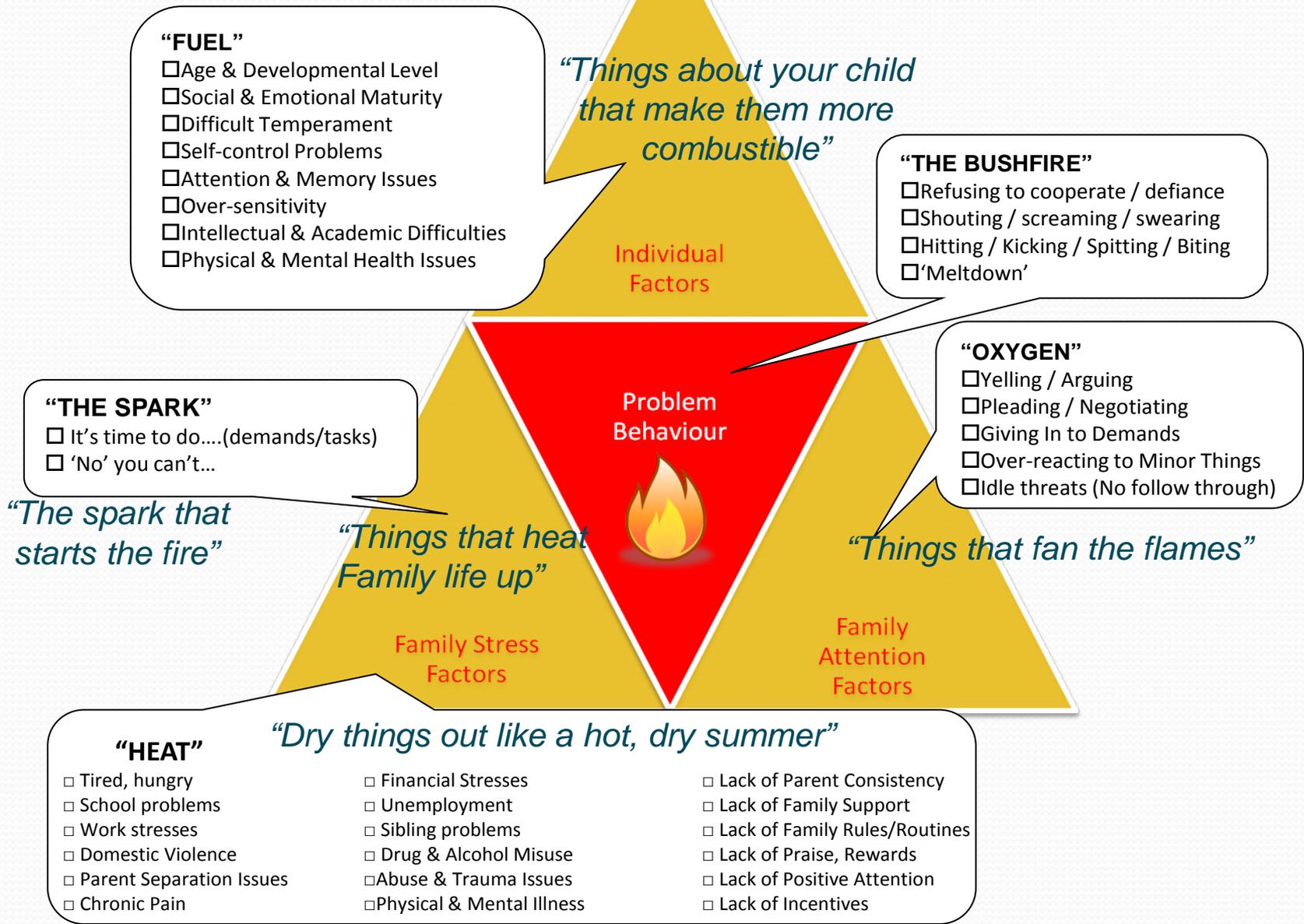


*How can we help parents to see their
child's behaviour for what it is ...
...and not what their Mind tells them?*

Bushfire Metaphor

- *In this program we find it useful to think of a parent's experience of dealing with their child's problem behaviour is like "being in a Bushfire".*
- *Sparks of "I want..." or "I don't want to...", turn into flames of whinging and defiance that then seem to blaze out of control as full-on tantrums and emotional meltdowns. A parent's attempts to fight the fire and put things out only seem to "Fan The Flames". Recovering from the Bushfire is often just as difficult as people's feelings are hurt and often embers are still glowing leaving parents feeling like another outbreak could occur at any moment ...*

Bushfire Metaphor



Bushfire Metaphor

- *Facilitates making contact with the parent's experience (Mind Struggle); and,*
- *Broadens the conceptualisation of the problem situation (elaborates parent's relational frames).*

How do we help parents to step back
from escalating coercive cycles that
increase 'Bushfire Risk'?

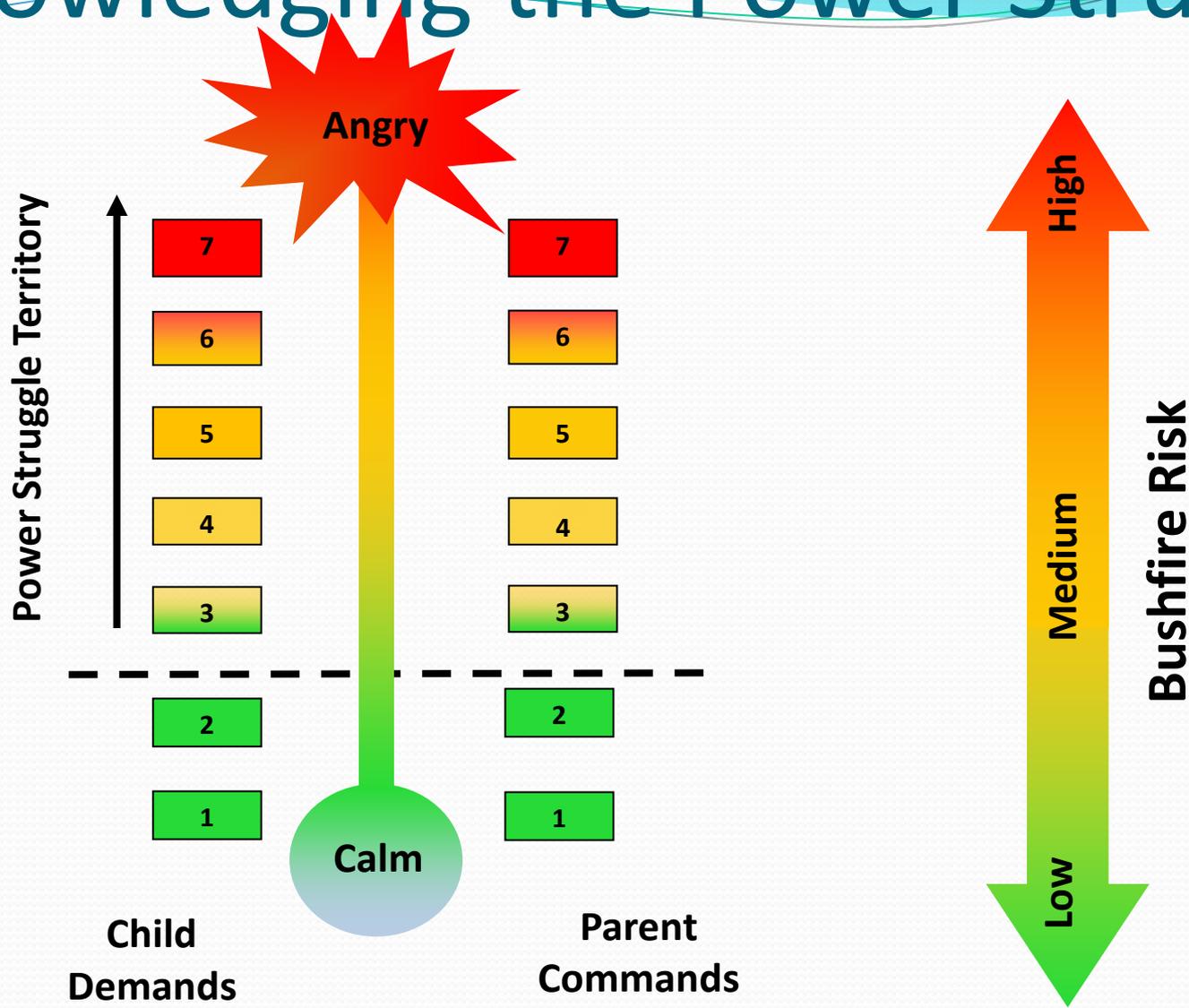
Introduction to Power Struggles

- We've invited parents to "Step Back" from the situation and look at it "as if" they are an observer to enable them to establish some emotional distance from the problem situation.
- Now we are going to take a closer look at the Oxygen that a parent can unintentionally add during a bushfire.
- We are going to act out a situation between a parent and a child that happens in most families. Notice what Oxygen is given to the child's demanding behaviour and what effect it has on the developing Bushfire.



*...a scene from a typical morning
in many families...*

Acknowledging the Power Struggle



Noticing the Mind Struggle

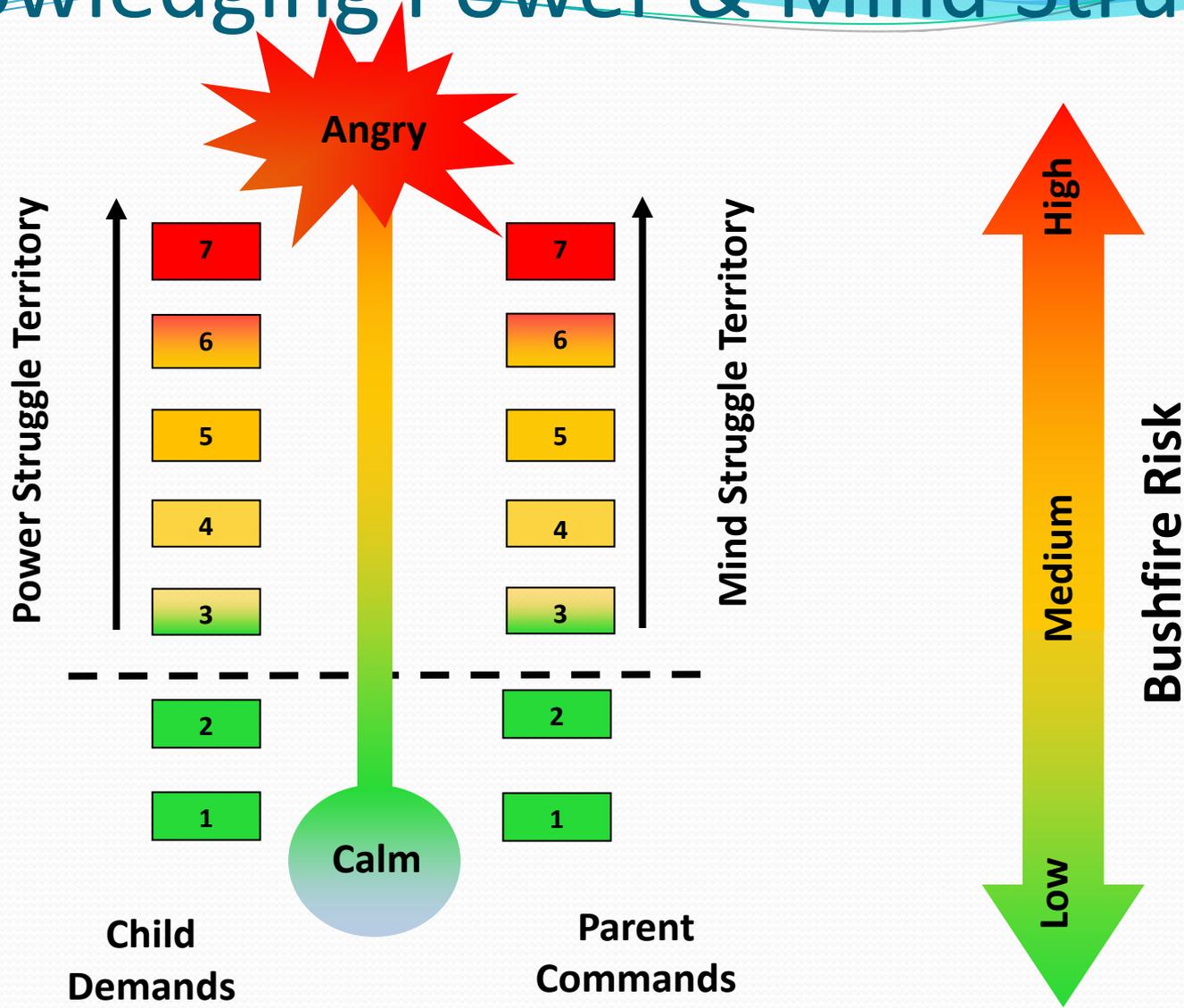
THOUGHTS & IMAGES

BODY SENSATIONS

FEELINGS

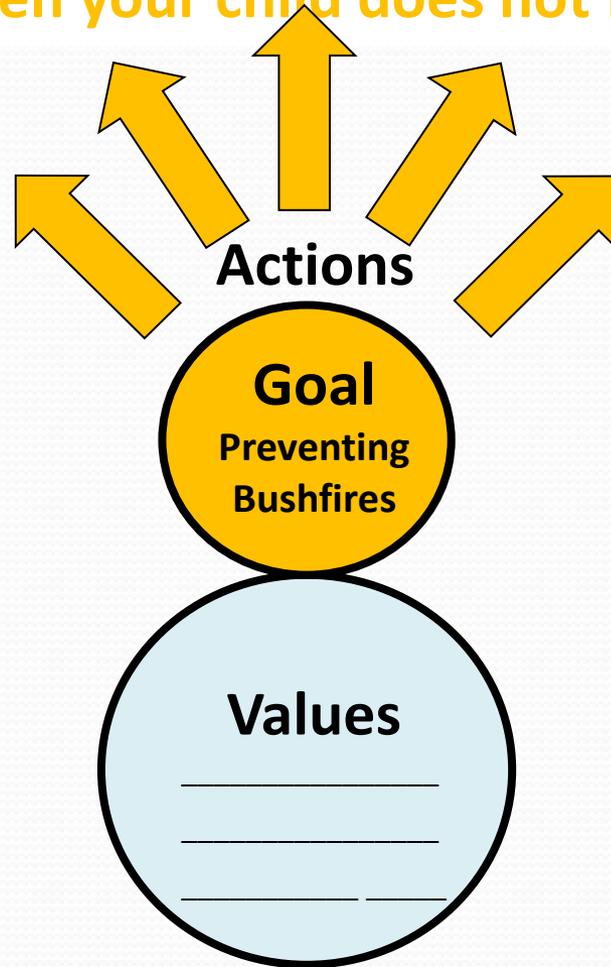
ACTIONS

Acknowledging Power & Mind Struggles



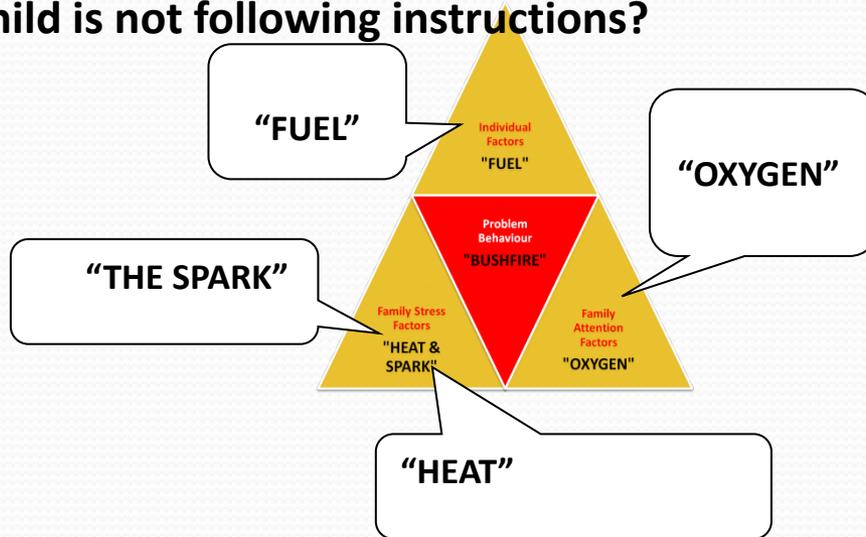
Week 2 - At Home Activity:

Monitor your child's behaviour and notice what is happening when your child does not follow instructions

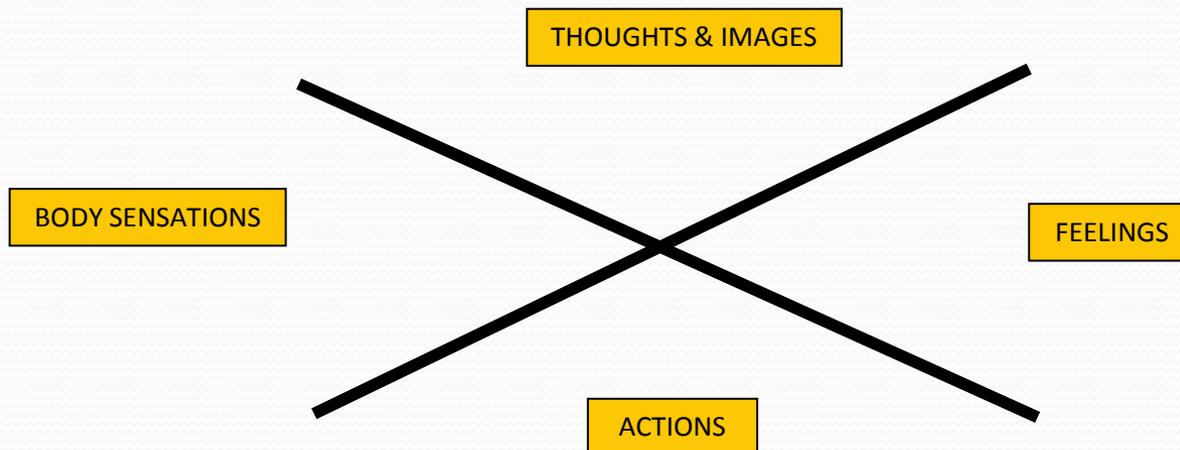


Week 2 - At Home Activity:

- What Bushfire Model factors (Fuel, Heat & Oxygen) are influencing the times when your child is not following instructions?



- Describe your Mind Struggle experience during the times when your child is not following instructions.

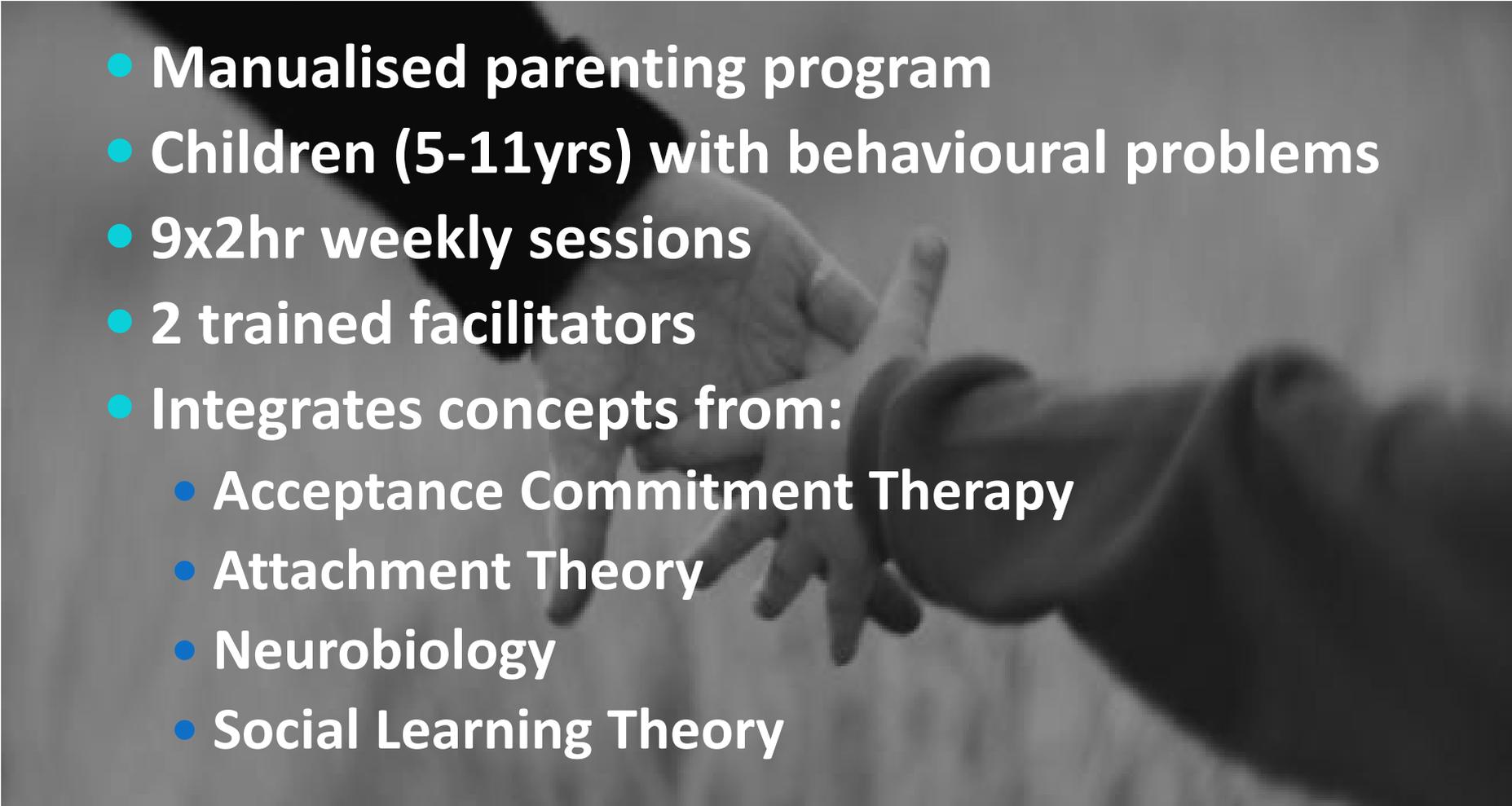




The Rest of the Story...

The Confident Carers – Cooperative Kids Program

(Konza & Donovan, 2006-2013)

- 
- **Manualised parenting program**
 - **Children (5-11yrs) with behavioural problems**
 - **9x2hr weekly sessions**
 - **2 trained facilitators**
 - **Integrates concepts from:**
 - **Acceptance Commitment Therapy**
 - **Attachment Theory**
 - **Neurobiology**
 - **Social Learning Theory**

The Confident Carers – Cooperative Kids Program (Konza & Donovan, 2006-2013)

Program Goals:



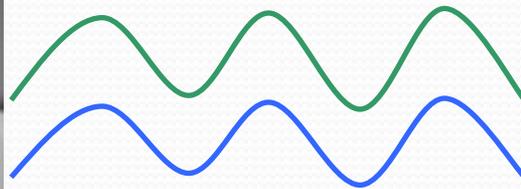
Further weeks of the program...

- **Wk3: Mindful Play & Describing**
 - **Wk4: Praise & Rewards**
 - **Wk5: Household Rules, Clear Instructions, Ignore-Distract-Praise**
 - **Wk6: Natural Consequences, Removal Privileges, Time-out**
 - **Wk7: 'Virus X' & Being the Parent You Want to Be**
 - **Wk8-9: Behaviour Action Plans**
- 

Reviewing 'Engagement'



- Getting in contact with The Struggle
- RH – RH : Images, videos, metaphors, experiential exercises
- Keeping them in Mind : Holding
- Wavelength : Tuning in



Child

Parent

The Wrap Up

- ACT provides a way to engage with parents so that they can re-engage with their children and then apply proven social learning theory strategies.
- Compasses, Bushfires and Power/Mind Struggles provide RH images and metaphors that enable parents to navigate through the turbulent times of family life.



Thank You

Any Questions

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