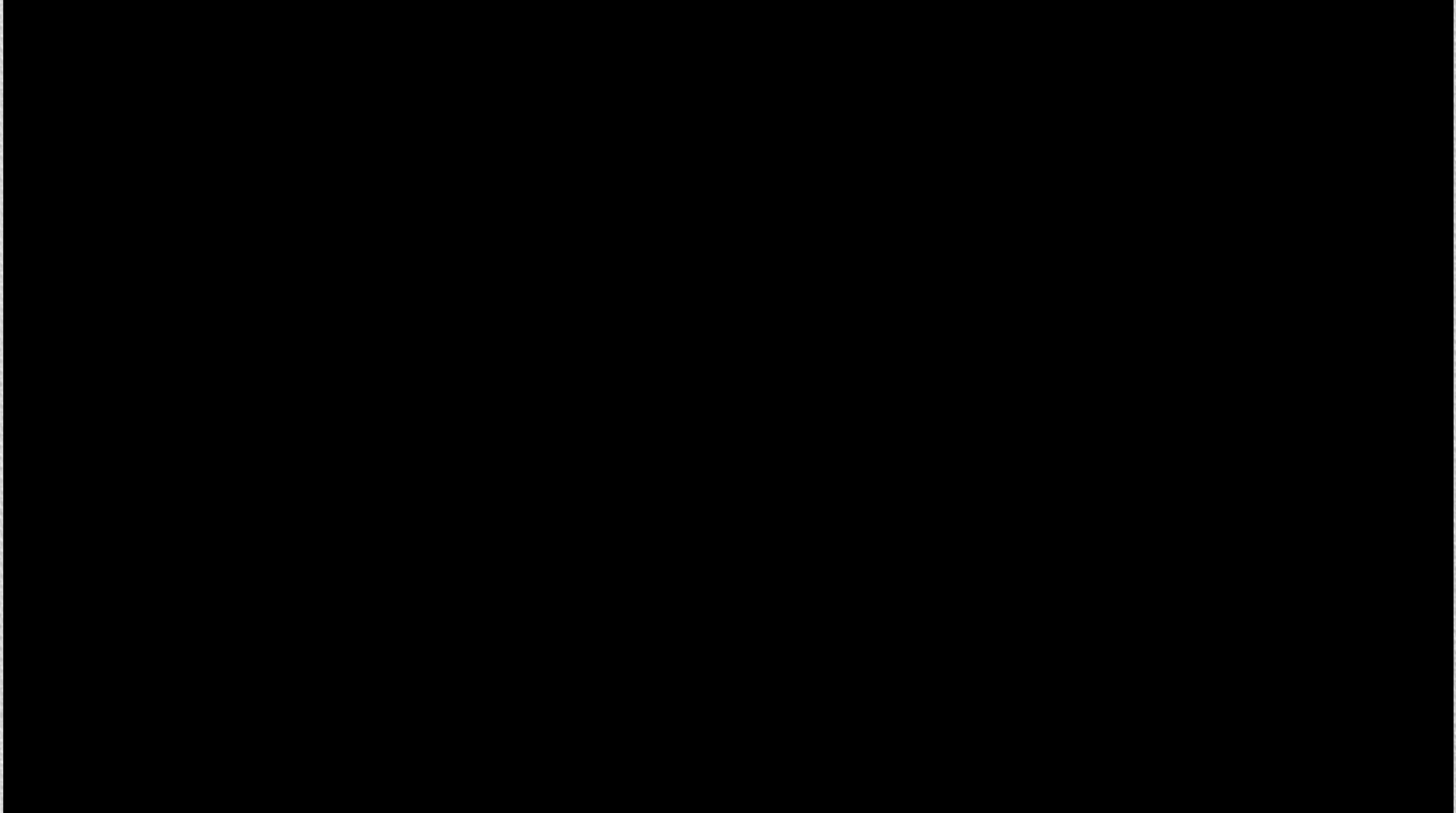




Thinking
Emotions

Inside out



Stress in parents of children with special needs

- Parents of children with special needs experience an increased level of parental stress and intense negative emotions, often related to the severity of their child's behavior.
- The experience of stress depends on how the individual perceives their situation and what types of coping strategies they use to manage stress.

Stress around transitions

- Transitions are characterized by uncertainty and extensive worry.
- Uncertainty can be a difficult experience - we feel that we have less control and autonomy.
- There are adaptive strategies to cope with uncertainty.

Emotions can be helpful or harmful

- Emotions can be either helpful or harmful, depending on the context.
- Emotions are helpful when they provide information regarding the best course of action, decisions, relationships etc.
- Emotions are harmful when they are too intense and when they bias cognition and behavior.
- It is these instances of unhelpful emotions that motivate a consideration of emotion regulation.

Why Emotion Regulation?

- Successful emotion regulation supports cognitive processes such as problem solving, learning and memory.
- Successful emotion regulation enhances relationships.
- Successful emotion regulation promotes physical and mental health.

Adaptive and maladaptive strategies

- Strategies we use can be adaptive or maladaptive.
- We want the strategy we use most often to be the most adaptive one.



Exercise

The glass exercise



Maladaptive emotion regulation strategies

- Avoidance
- Distraction
- Suppression
- Rumination



Common 'traps' we fall into

- She is doing it on purpose.
- He'll never change.
- Why does this always happen?
- He never does what I ask him.
- Why do I deserve this?
- Now this whole day is ruined.



Adaptive emotion regulation strategies.

- Cognitive reappraisal.
- Situation modification.
- Seeking social support.

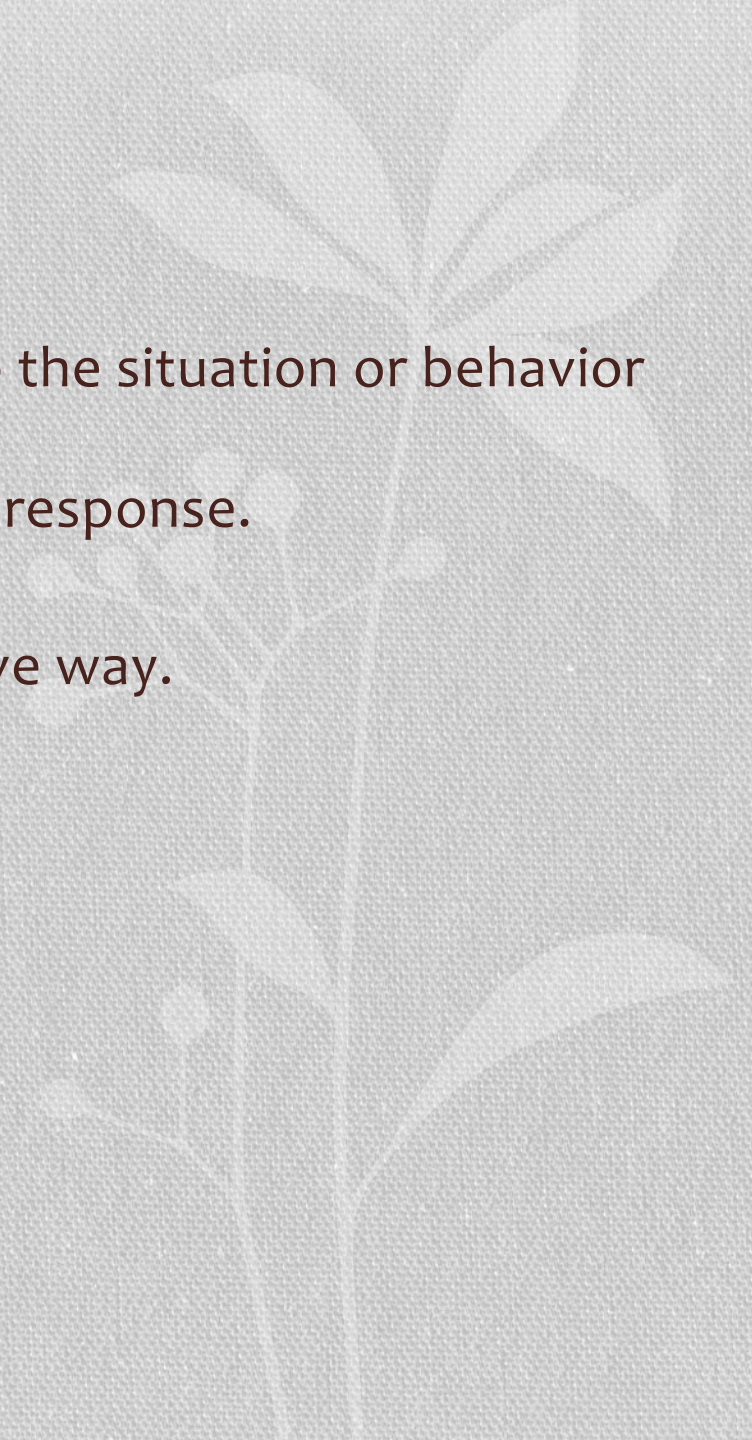


Rethinking



Rethinking

- Giving a new, different interpretation to the situation or behavior that positively influences the emotional response.
- Rethinking the situation in a constructive way.



Parental Emotion Regulation:

- From infancy, the child focuses on his parents (attachment figure) as a source of reliable information about the world and the self.
- Regulating ourselves as adults can be hard and complex so imagine how hard it is for a child.
- Successful co-regulation of parents and children reinforces the parent-child relationship.
- Our regulation as parents is related to the way we were parented.

Holding the mind in mind



Holding the mind in mind

- Giving meaning to yours and the child's behavior.
- Understanding the child's behavior in terms of his underlying feeling and intentions.



Key in promoting a child's affect regulation.



Understanding the mind of children with special needs - why is it so complicated?

- Difficulties in processing social information.
- Reading the mind of an ASD child is extremely hard for both the child and the parent ("mindblindness").
- The parents need to make an effort to understand the incomprehensible mostly without getting an immediate reward.

Understanding the mind of children with special needs - why is it so complicated?

- Parents of children with special needs need to cope with more prolonged and intense negative emotions.
- In the case of negative emotions, it is harder to understand the mind of the child, but it is also more important.
- A child with special needs, needs relationships to survive but is unable to form them without parents' long term guidance.
- Regulating your own and your child's emotions is not always manageable. No one can do it all the time. Accepting that has a regulating effect.

Exercise

- Please think of a recent time when you experienced an emotional situation with your child.
- Share what you were feeling in the situation.
- Share what you were thinking in the situation.
- Elaborate on how your child might have felt in this situation.
- What is a different way of thinking in the situation? Try to reframe the situation.

Summary

- It is beneficial to manage stress and emotions.
- When we do it successfully we support ourselves and our children.
- Rethinking and holding the mind in mind are adaptive strategies to managing stress and negative emotions.