

HELPING FAMILIES  
thrive 

# Banishing Bedtime Battles



*Evidence-based approaches to support sleep*

HELPING  
FAMILIES **thrive**

# Workshop Agenda

- **About Us**
- **Research on sleep**
- **How to create:**
  - **A healthy sleep environment**
  - **An effective bedtime routine**
- **Preventing power struggles**
- **Strategies for:**
  - **Staying in bed**
  - **Night wakings**
  - **Bedtime fears**
- **Next Steps**





# Meet Us

**Shanna Alvarez, Ph.D.**  
**Psychologist**  
**Speech Language Pathologist**  
**Mom of 3**

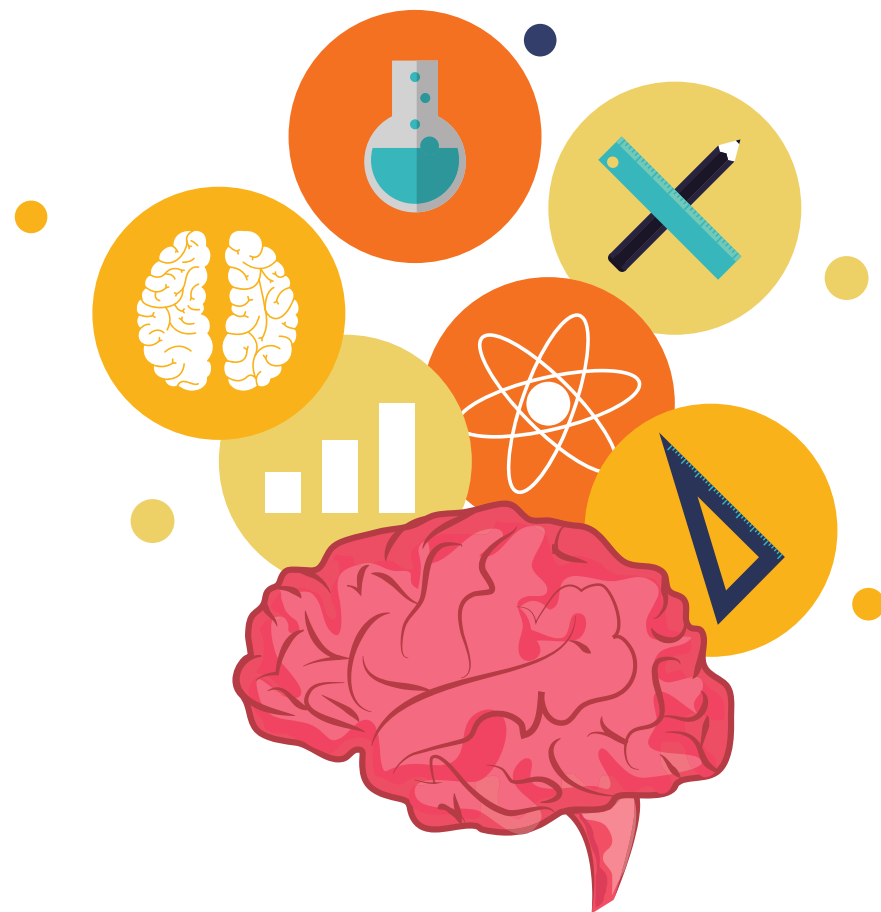


**Jenna Elgin, Ph.D.**  
**Psychologist**  
**Mom of 3**



# Our Mission

To bridge the gap between the academic and research world and the every day parent.

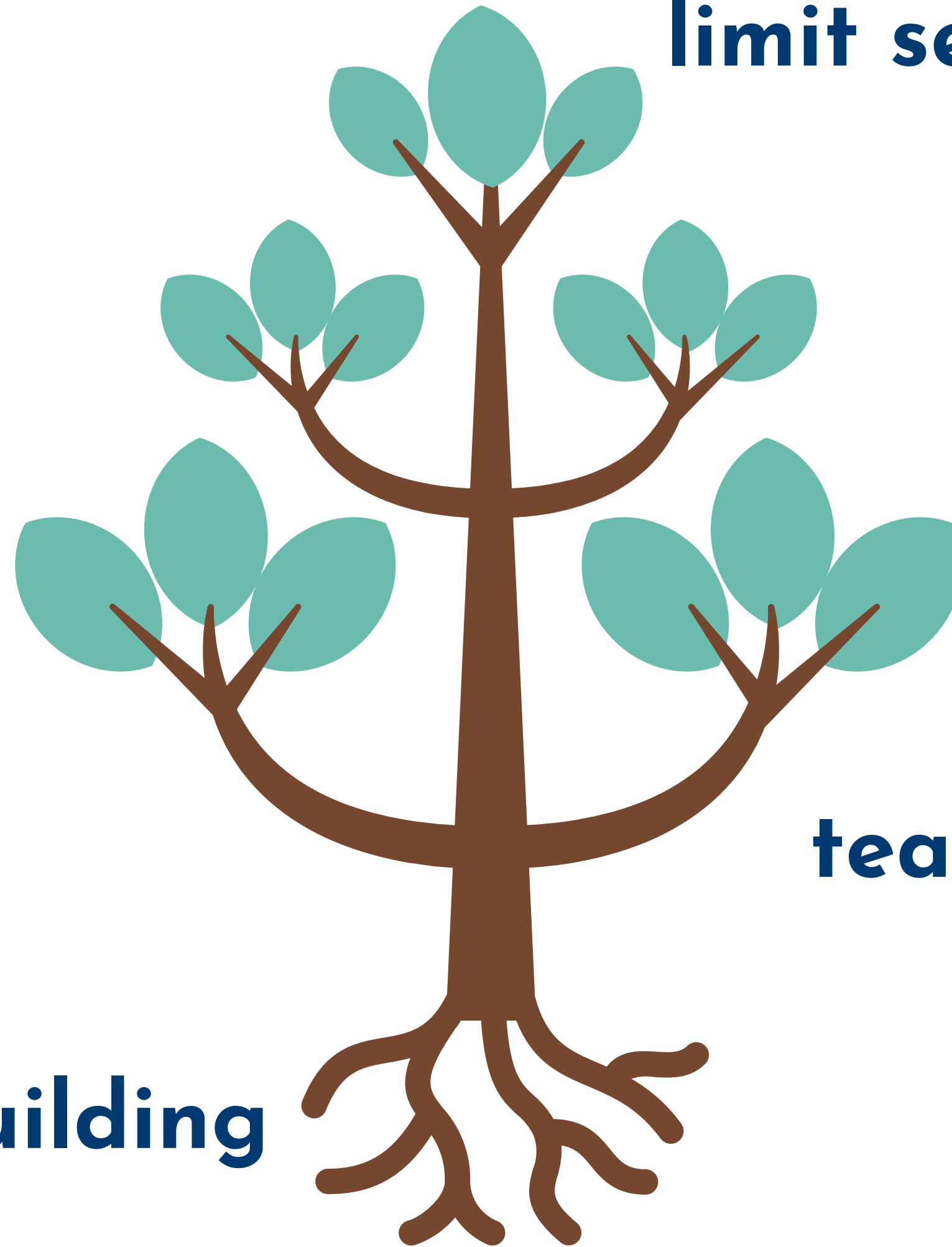


# THE HFT PARENTING TREE



**limit setting**

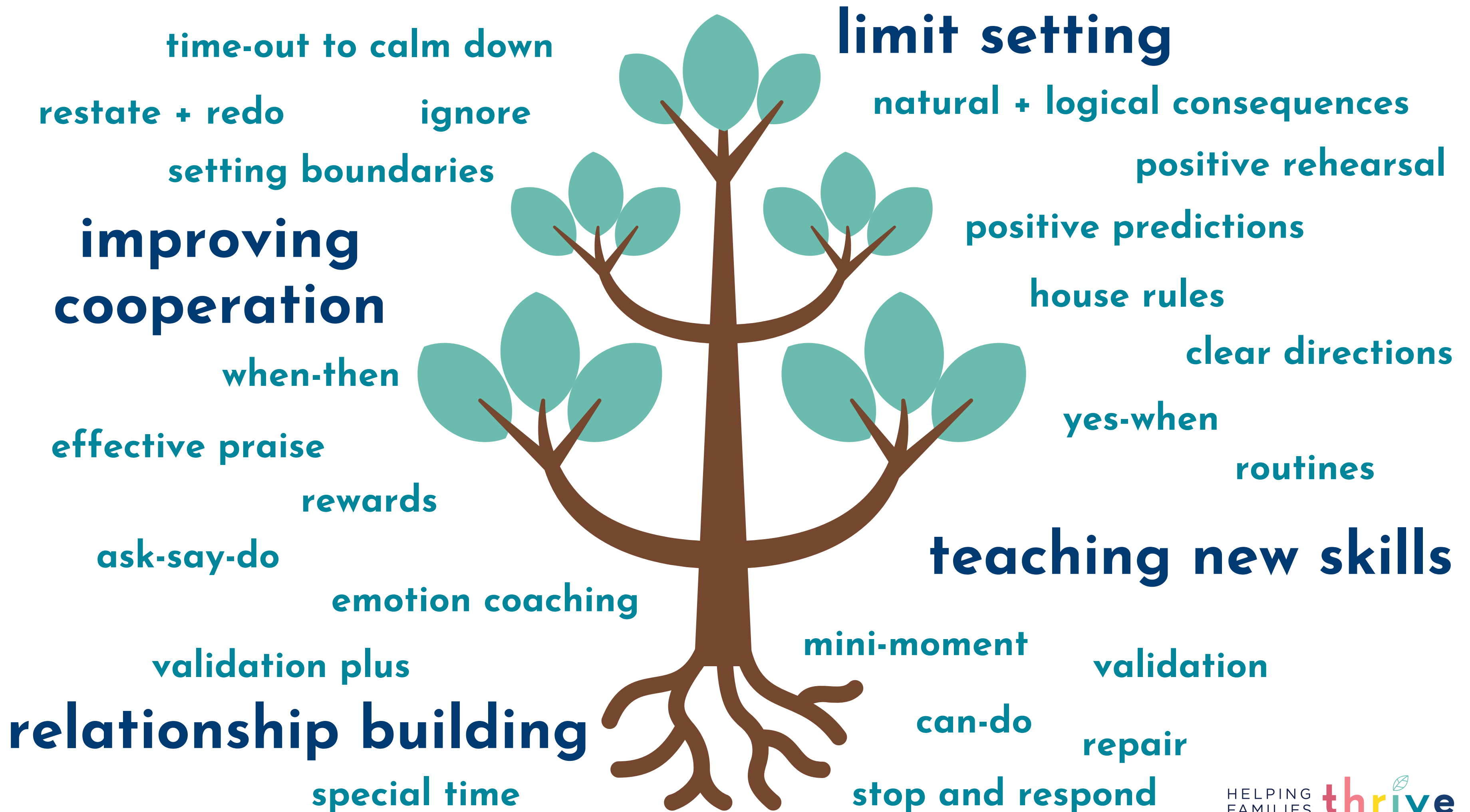
**improving  
cooperation**

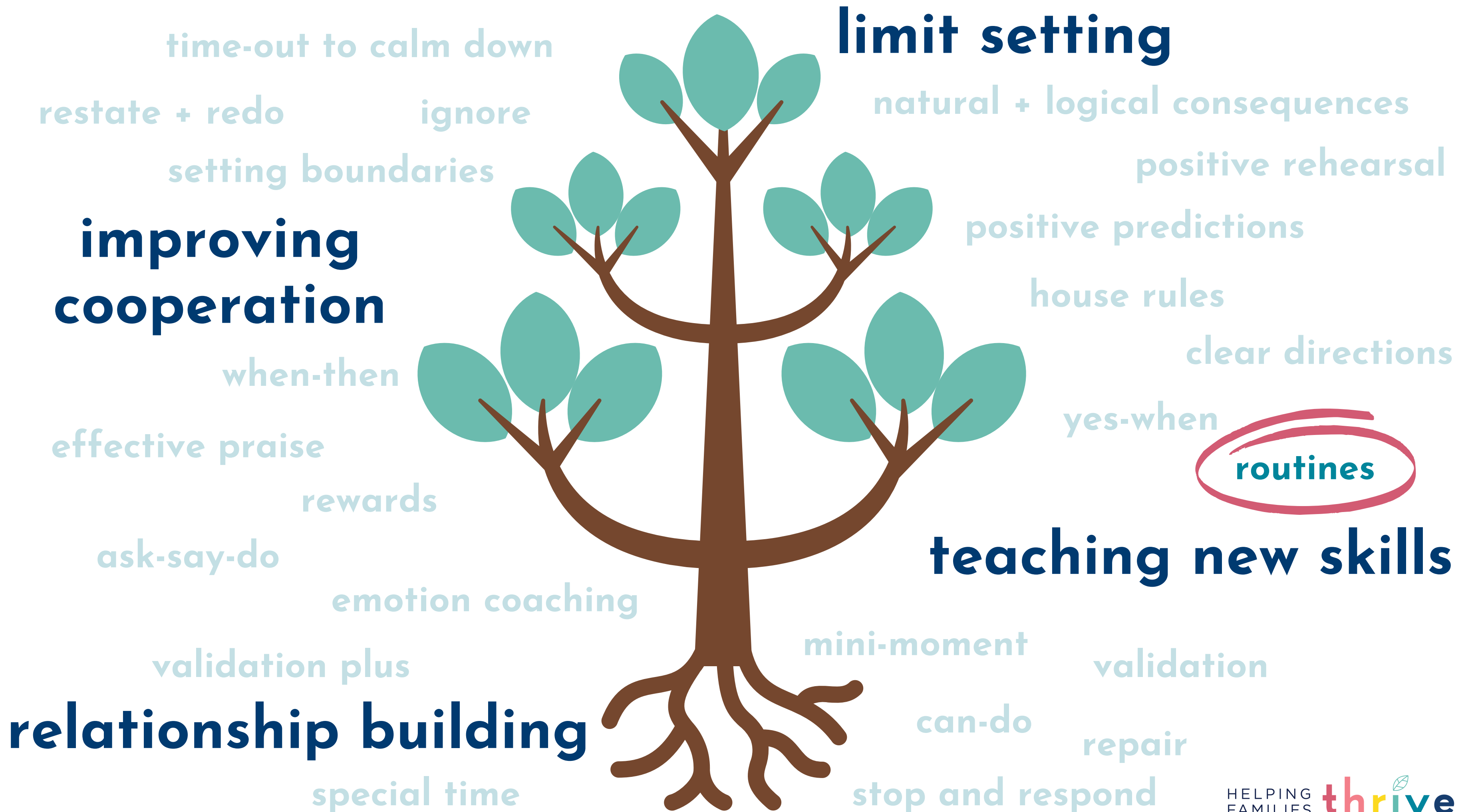


**teaching new skills**

**relationship building**

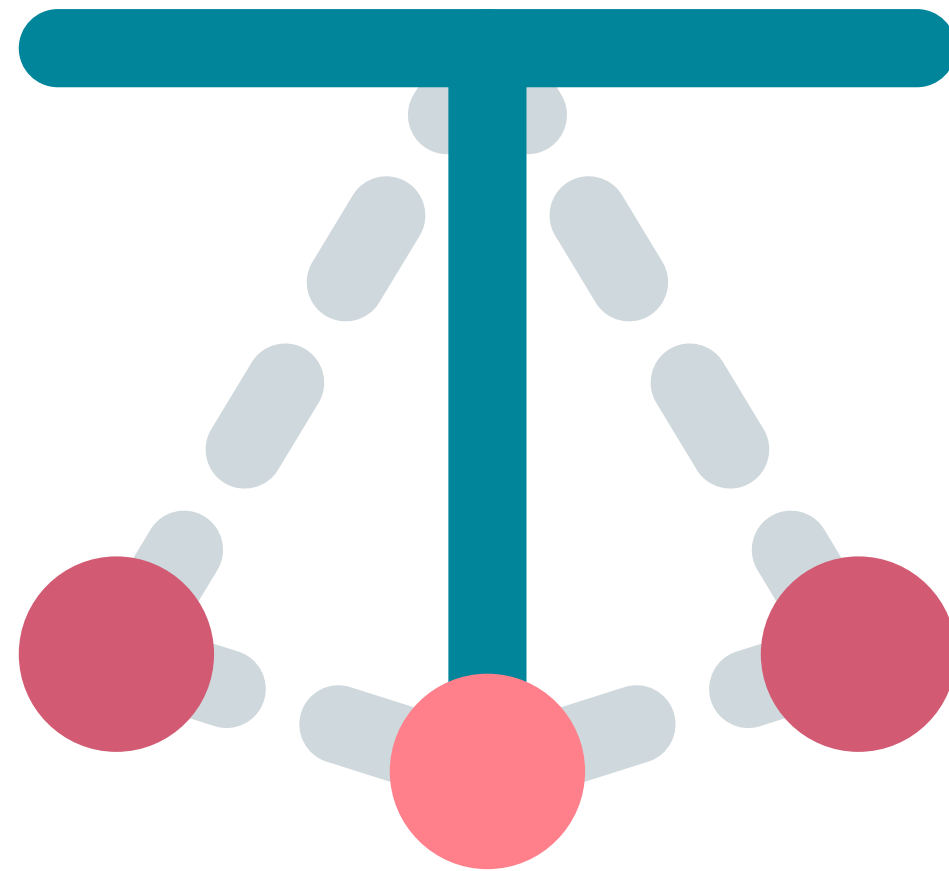






# The Parenting Pendulum

**authoritarian**

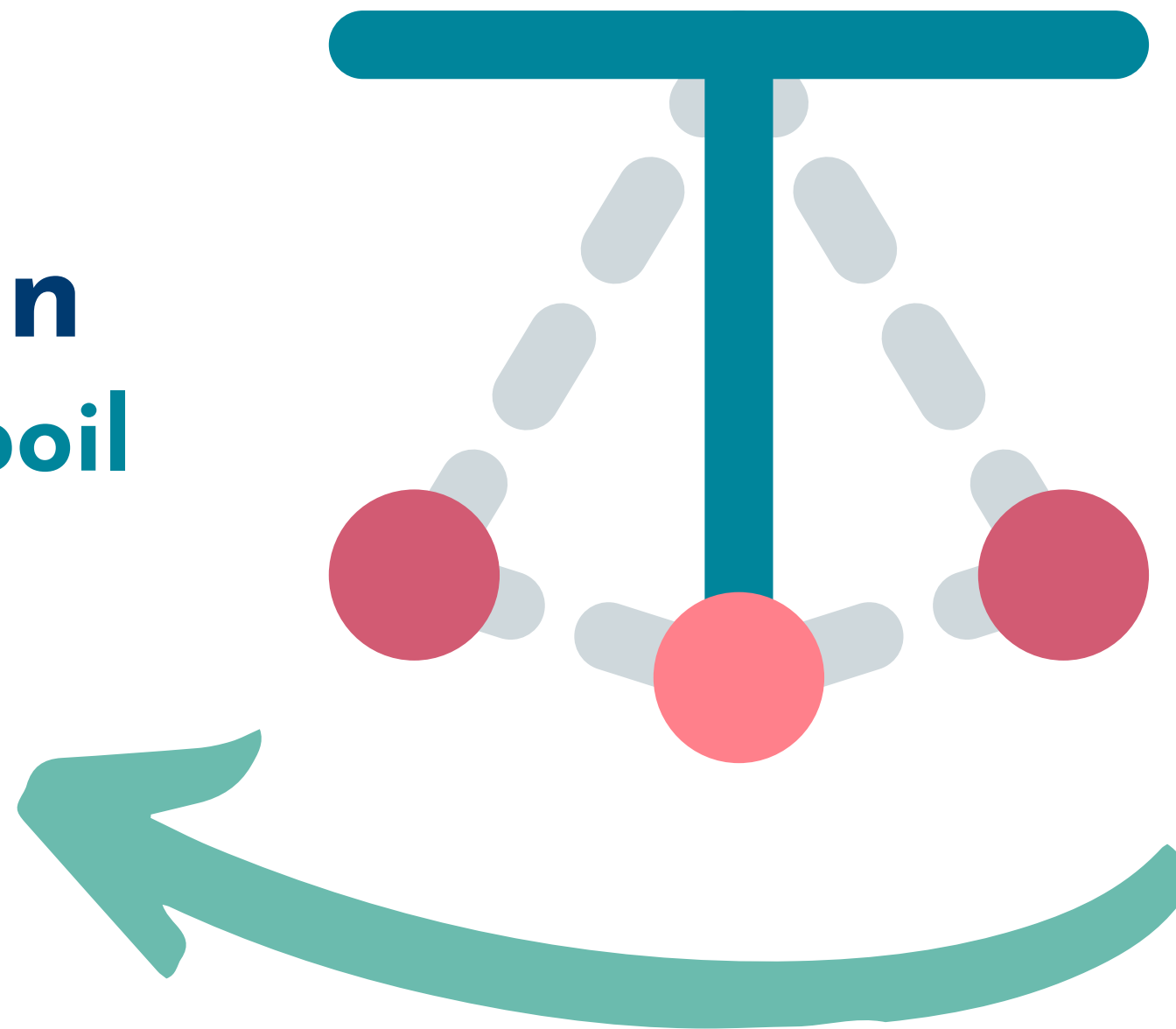


**purely positive**



# The Parenting Pendulum

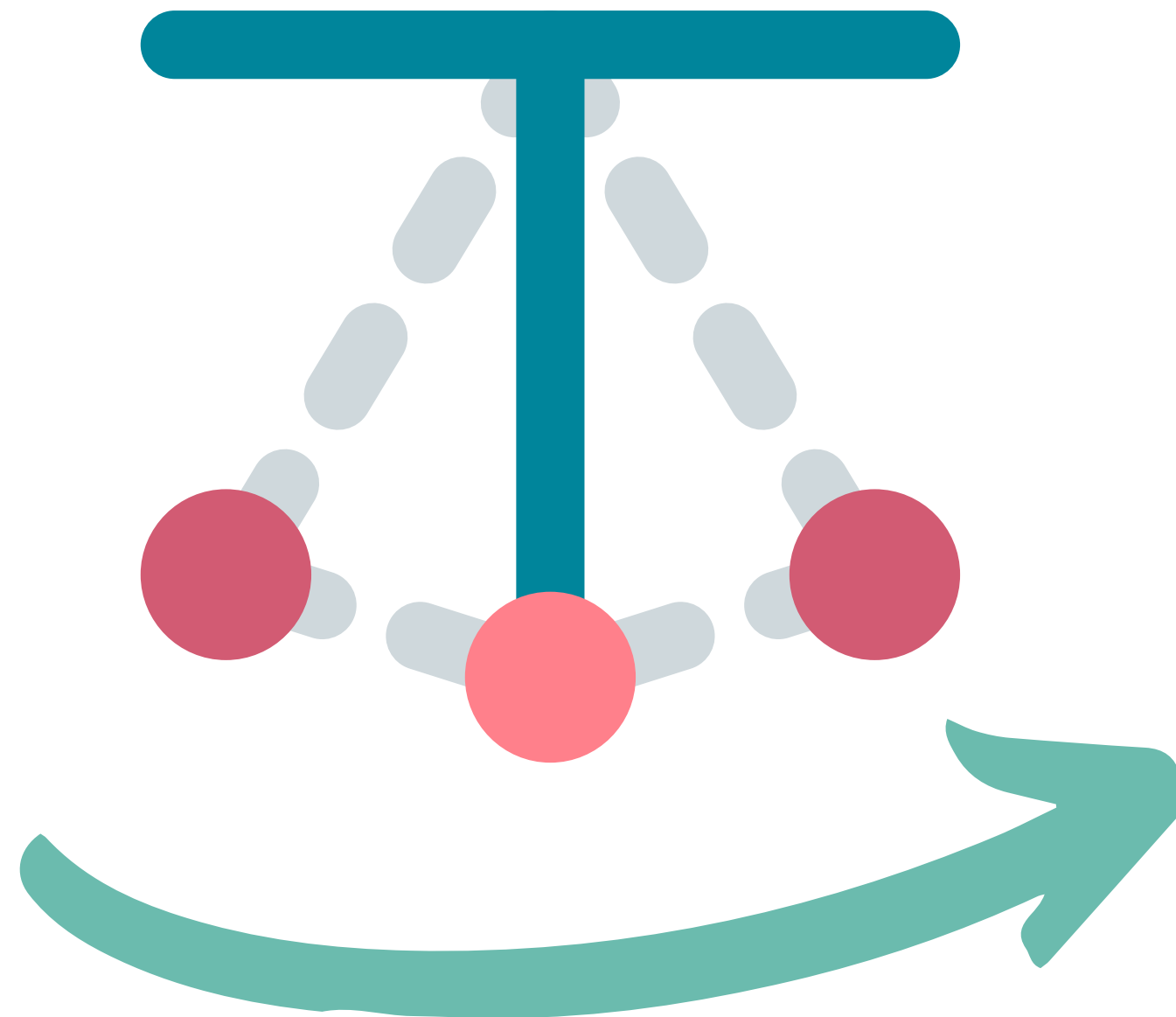
**authoritarian**  
spare the rod, spoil  
the child



**purely positive**

# The Parenting Pendulum

**authoritarian**  
spare the rod, spoil  
the child



**purely positive**  
lack of any  
consequences

# The Parenting Seesaw





# The Parenting Seesaw

Warmth



# The Parenting Seesaw

Warmth

Boundaries



Warmth

Boundaries



**Why is this balance  
so hard when it comes  
to sleep?**

# Co-Regulation



## Myth

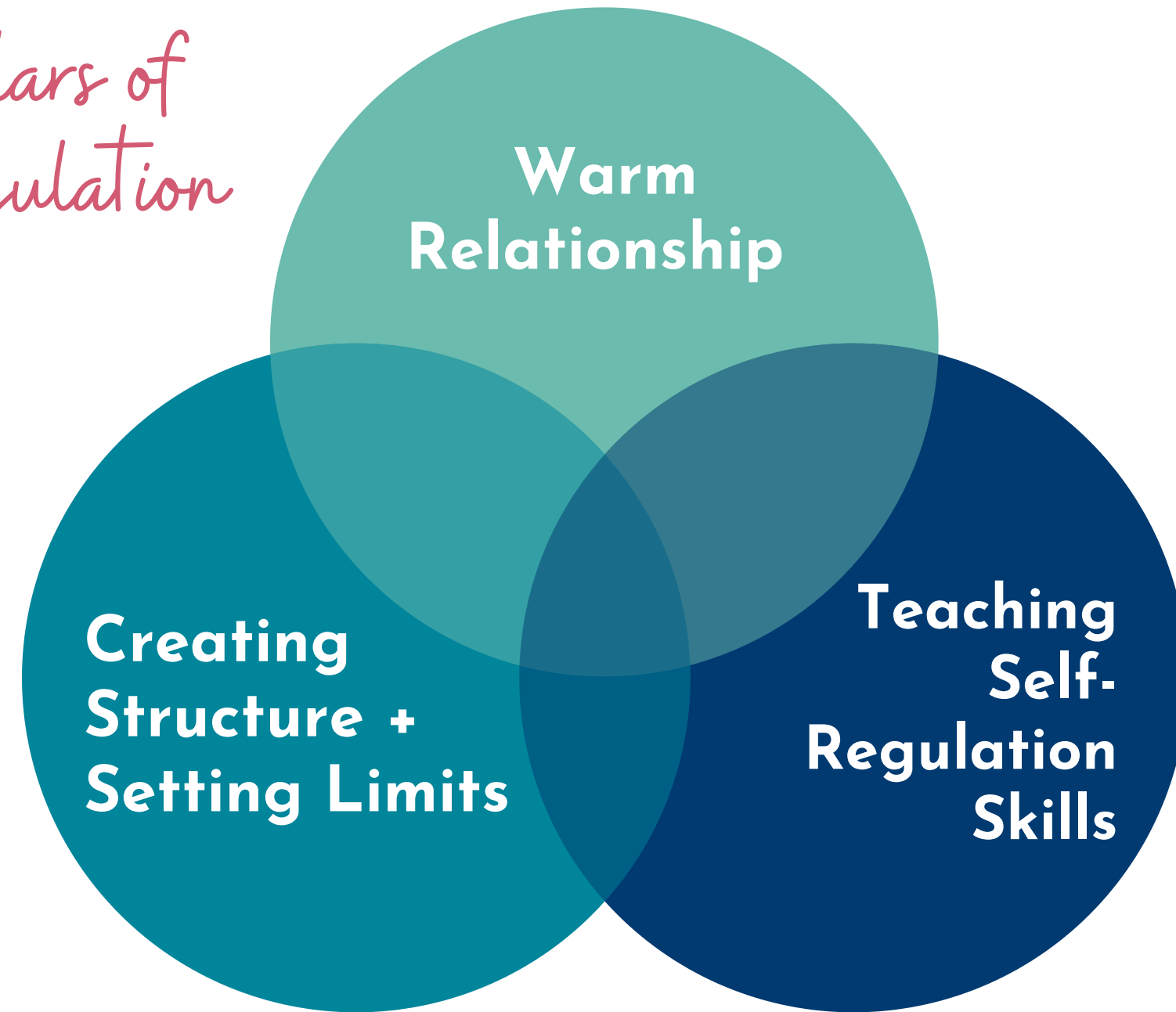
**Co-regulation means I should coach and stay physically next to my child through every emotion and behavior for them to feel "safe".**

## Truth

**Co-regulation involves a variety of parent behaviors that allow the child to develop self-regulation over time.**

# Co-Regulation

*3 pillars of  
co-regulation*



# Scaffolding Ladder



where we want them to be

find the "just right"  
amount of challenge

where they are now

Autonomy support  
(scaffolding) found to  
predict later emotion  
regulation



*What do we know about sleep?*





# Are Sleep Behaviors Driven By Nature or Nurture?



# Both!

*Research suggests genetics contribute approximately 1/3 while environment factors contributes the rest.*



# Are Sleep Behaviors Driven By Nature or Nurture?



# Both!



*Research suggests genetics contribute approximately 1/3 while environment factors contributes the rest.*

*But this is the one we can control!*

# Effective Bedtime Routines



*have been shown in the research to:*

- ✓ **Decrease time to fall asleep**
- ✓ **Lead to earlier bedtime**
- ✓ **Decrease behavior challenges during the day**
- ✓ **Decrease night wakings**
- ✓ **Improve mood for mom**





# Step 1: Determine Bedtime





# Late and Irregular Bedtimes



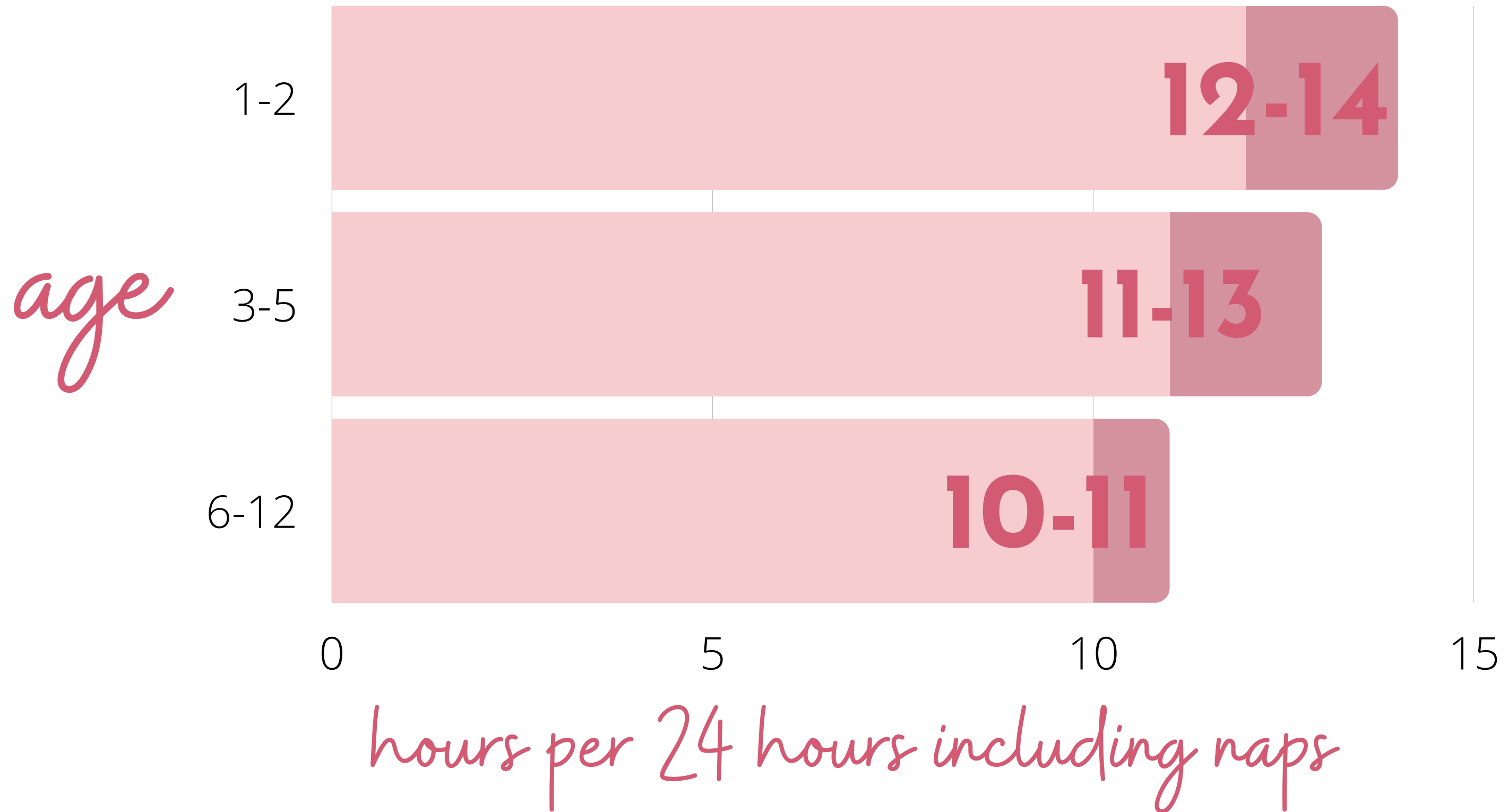
*Are associated with:*

- *less total sleep*
- *behavior difficulties*
- *higher obesity*
- *lower resilience*
- *higher depression*





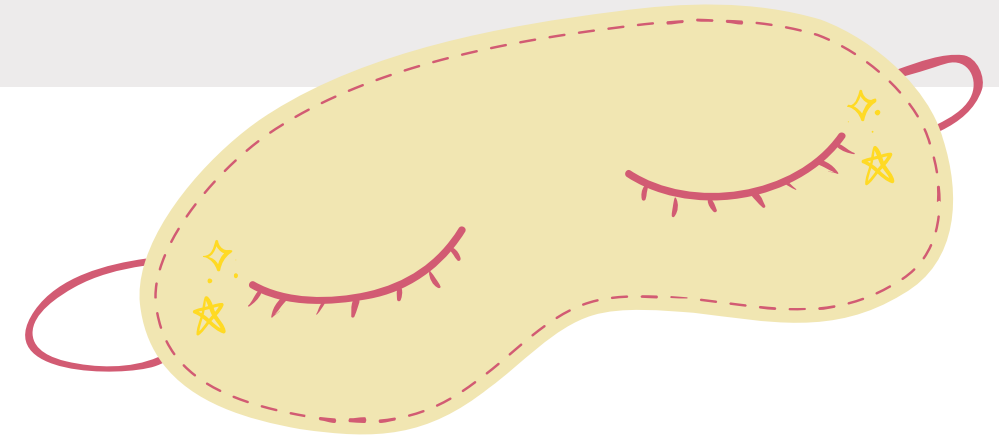
# How much sleep?





# Bedtime and Mornings

- **7:00 - 8:30 pm for toddlers and preschoolers**
- **Bedtime is biggest predictor of total sleep duration**
- **Parents have more control over bedtime as morning wake time is more biologically driven**



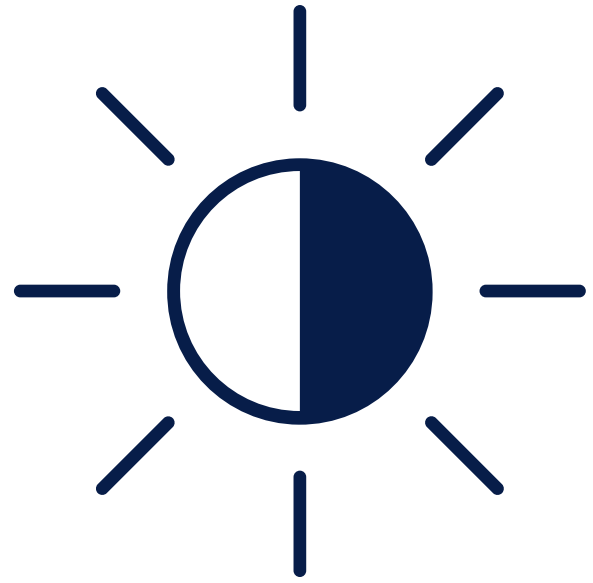


# Naps



- **Naps can begin to interfere with bedtime for some preschoolers**
  - **Option: end nap early (45 min)**
  - **Option: 30 min at end of bedtime for quiet reading in bed after routine**

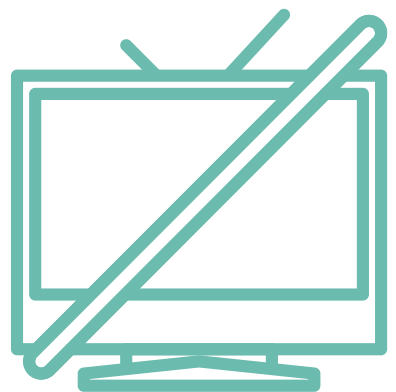
# Step 2: Set a Healthy Sleep Environment



**Dark**



**Cool/Comfortable**



**No screens**

**Quiet**



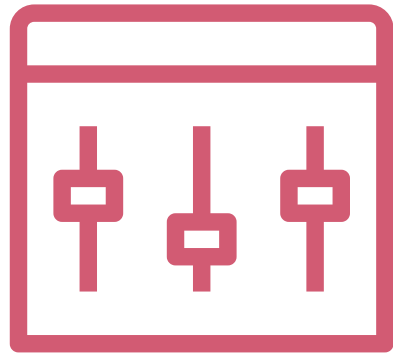
# Step 3: Create Routine

- **Consistent time each night, including weekends**
- **Same order every night**
- **Should include several soothing activities**
- **Short and sweet (30 min)**
- **Include language-based item (song, story telling, book)**

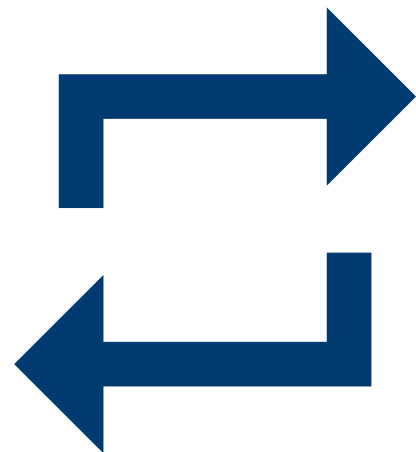
steps



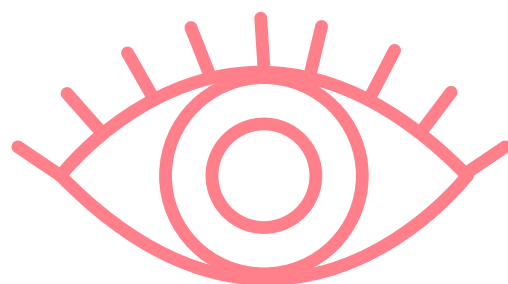
**List all possible activities in the routine**



**Adjust expectations +  
pick your battles**



**Create routine by ordering  
activities in a motivating manner**



**Make it visual**



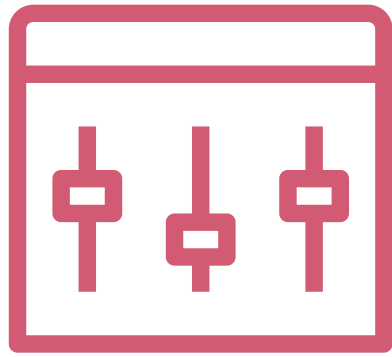
**List all possible activities in the routine**

**Category 1:  
Bedtime Jobs**

**Potty**  
**Brush teeth**  
**Pajamas**  
**Clothes in hamper**  
**Pick out clothes**  
**Bath\***  
**Drink of water**

**Category 2:  
Soothing Activities**

**Special time**  
**Book**  
**Song**  
**Bath\***  
**Massage**  
**Cuddles**



Adjust expectations + your battles  
*what tasks can you "save for later"?*

## Category 1: Bedtime Jobs

Potty

Brush teeth

Pajamas

~~Clothes~~ in hamper

Pick out ~~clothes~~

Bath\*

Drink of water

## Category 2: Soothing Activities

Special time

Book

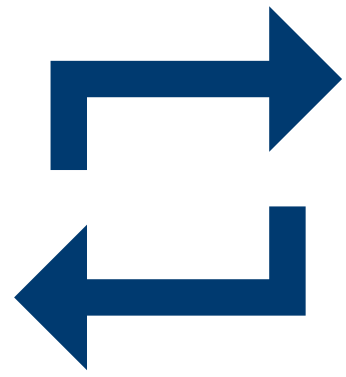
Song

Bath\*

Massage

Cuddles





Create routine by ordering activities in a motivating manner

*minimize transitions and increase motivation*

## Bedtime Routine

## Where?

Special time

Bath

Pajamas

Books

Teeth

Potty

Cuddles

Goodnight

Living room

Bathroom

Bedroom

Bedroom

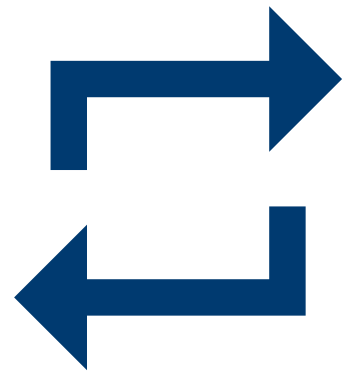
Bathroom

Bathroom

Bedroom

Bedroom

*Too many transitions!*



Create routine by ordering activities in a motivating manner

*minimize transitions and increase motivation*

## Bedtime Routine

Special time

Bath

Pajamas

Books

Teeth

Potty

Cuddles

Goodnight

## New Routine

Bath

Brush teeth

Potty

Pajamas

Special time

Books

Cuddles

Goodnight



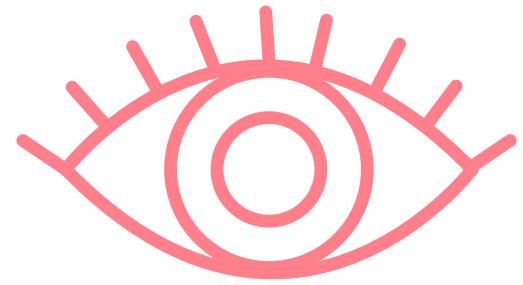
Special time moved to bedroom



Jobs before soothing



Less transitions



## Make it visual

*Yes, even if you think your child knows the routine!*

- **Decreases commands from parents**
- **Decreases executive functioning demand on child**
- **Increases consistency between caregivers**
- **Doesn't have to be fancy!**



age 2

# Sweet Dreams



age 6

# Sweet Dreams



# Routine Self-Check

- ✓ **Consistent bedtime + routine start time**
- ✓ **Soothing sleep environment**
- ✓ **Consistent routine**
- ✓ **Simple**
- ✓ **Visual**
- ✓ **Jobs --> Soothing**
- ✓ **Minimal Transitions**

# Preventing Power Struggles

- **Introduce + practice**
  - **Use dolls/stuffy**
- **Post and check schedule**
  - **Can use stickers or check marks**
- **Slowly increase independence**
  - **ask-say-do**



# Preventing Power Struggles

**Tool 1**

**Attention principle**

- **Praise + ignore**

**Tool 2**

**When-then or first-then**

**Tool 3**

**Give choices**

# Step 4: The routine is over. Now what?

*We have options!*

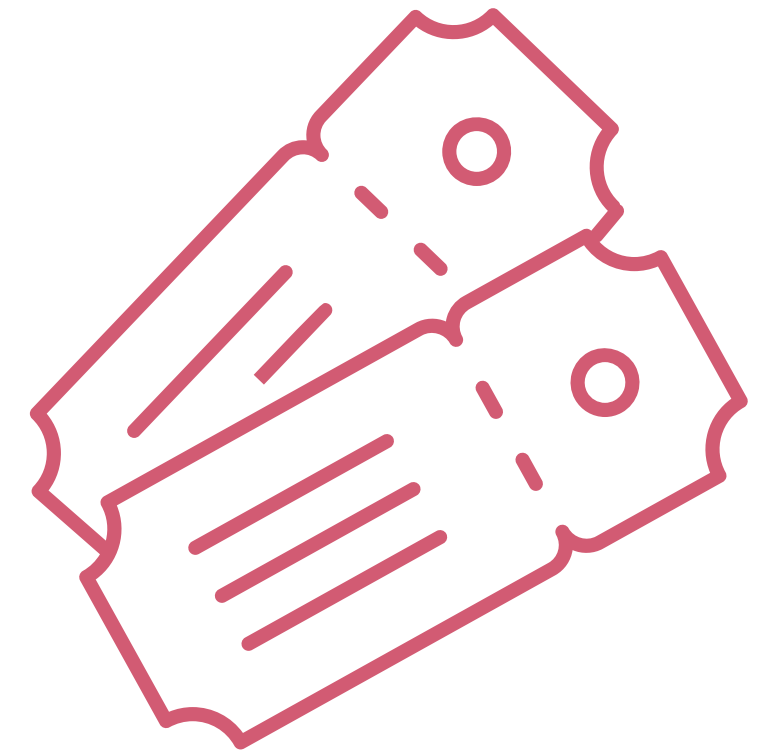
- **Stay with your child while they fall asleep**
- **Bedtime fading**
- **Bedtime pass**
- **Camping out method**
- **Leave and check**

# Bedtime Fading

- **For kids 2.5 and older if struggling with sleep onset**
- **Initially put to bed at the time they fall asleep naturally**
- **Goal to create an association of bed = fall asleep quickly and smoothly**
- **Every few nights bring bedtime forward by 15 min to desired time**
- **Can be paired with other strategies**

# Bedtime Pass

- **Child is given 1+ passes at bedtime**
- **Pass can be exchanged for a request (e.g., water) or parent visit**
- **One passes are gone, parents do a quiet return to bed and ignore requests**
- **Option: Remaining passes can be exchanged for a small reward in the morning**
- **Can reduce number of passes over time**



# Camping Out Method

- **Parent sits in chair near child's bed until they fall asleep**
- **Every three nights move chair further away**
- **Eventually can turn into a leave and check approach**



# Leave and Check

- **Tell the child that after you say goodnight, you will come right back to check on them**
- **Check quickly at first**
- **Gradually lengthen time between checks**
- **"How many times do you want me to check tonight?"**



# Night Wakings

*By using the routine and bedtime strategies, already reducing the likelihood of nighttime wakings!*

## Option 1

**Only use the new behavioral strategies at bedtime and respond to night wakings as usual**

## Option 2

**Use the one of the bedtime strategies (e.g., leave + check, camp out) for night wakings**

# Bedtime Fears

## Things to keep in mind:

- **anxiety gets worse with avoidance and accommodations**
- **excessive reassurance can increase anxiety**
- **treatment for anxiety includes exposure**



# Bedtime Fears

## So can we do:

- **give anxiety a name! (worry monster)**
- **replace reassurance with 'validation plus'**
- **role play + practice**
- **develop coping skills such as coping mantras, positive self-statements and deep breathing**
- **go slower**

# Next Steps

**If daytime is going well and most difficulties are just in the evening/night time:**

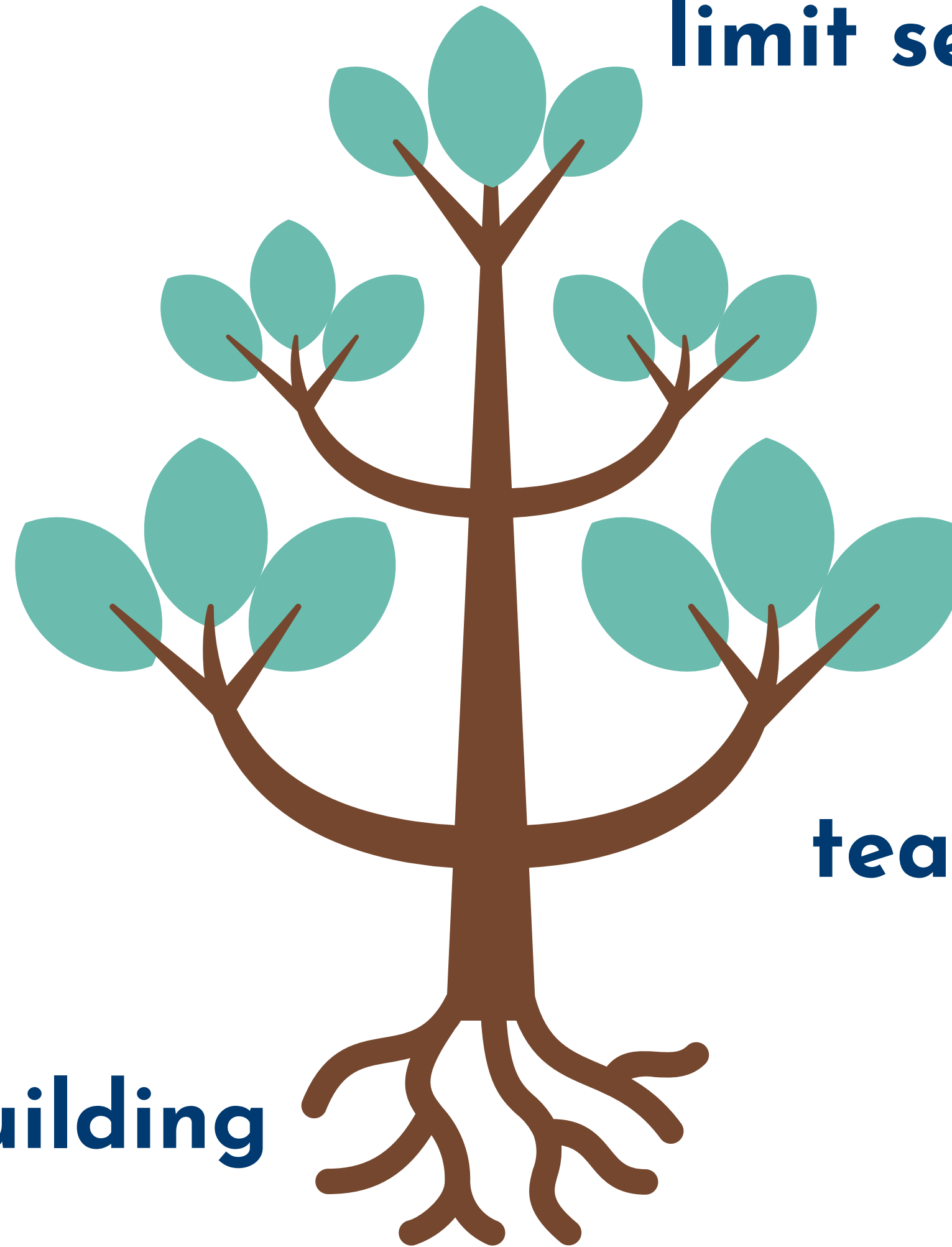
- **Our routines course or a sleep specialist**

**Struggling throughout the day with cooperation or other challenges?**

- **HFT Essentials course**
- **The Incredible Years**
- **Triple P**
- **Parent Management Training**
- **PCIT**
- **CBT for Anxiety**

**limit setting**

**improving  
cooperation**



**teaching new skills**

**relationship building**

Q+A