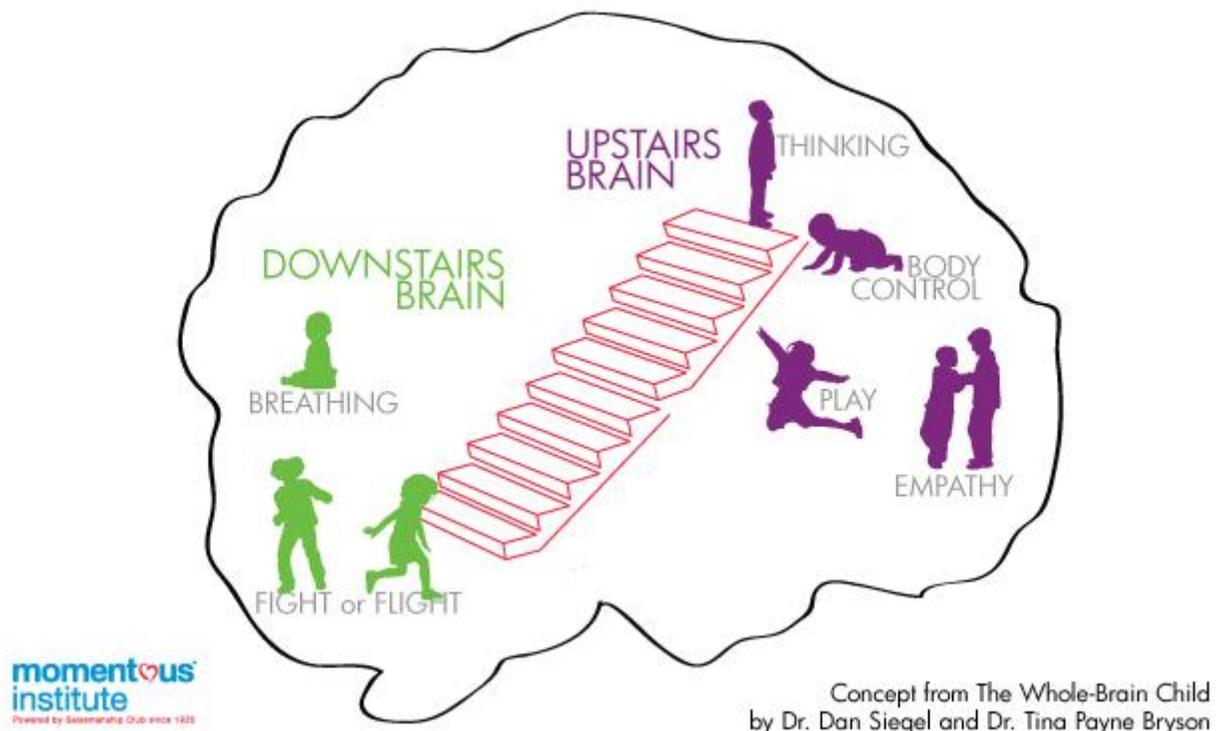


## The High Cost of High Stress: Overachievers, Underachievers, and How to Use Self-Compassion for Success

-In the high-stakes environment of high school, many students are feeling the pressure. Whether your teen is a perfectionist, a chronic underachiever, or somewhere in between, self-doubt and self-criticism can amplify the effects of stress and lead to feelings of overwhelm. In this workshop you'll learn the tenets of self-compassion, what research suggests to help teens use these concepts to manage stress and the benefits to you and your teen's sense of self-worth.



### What happens to adolescents' brains & bodies when stressed?

- Stress hormones (i.e. cortisol & adrenaline) increase
- Breathing and heart rate accelerate
- Downstairs brain signals sympathetic nervous system to prepare for fight, flight or freeze
- Emotional flooding can occur, leading to the upstairs brain going offline (meltdown!)
- Decision making skills are compromised

### What are the warning signs of overload?

- Irritability, lethargy, hyper- or hypoarousal (i.e. exploding or shutting down)
- Reverting to age-incongruent behaviors
- Decreased tolerance for change and transitions
- Loss of interest in, or resistance to, previously enjoyed activities
- Window of tolerance & appropriate stress level: when is it too much?

## Changing Your Mindset

- Self-compassion vs self-esteem
- Three components of self-compassion: self-kindness, common humanity & mindfulness
- Self-kindness: How we respond to ourselves during moments of stress & suffering; forgiveness and learning from mistakes vs self-criticism
- Common humanity: Teens can feel isolated in experience of school stress, family stress, relationship stress; value of community, connection and universality of failure and struggle
- Mindfulness: Guided imagery, deep breathing, progressive muscle relaxation
  - Cultivating self-awareness: What do I sense, think, feel? How do I recognize when I'm overwhelmed? How do I respond to stress?

## Dr. Kristen Neff: 3 Elements of Self-Compassion



## Role of Parents

- Understand your own stress response: What happens in your brain & body when stressed?
- Use empathy to connect, communicate and reflect: What does brain science tell us? How do I know when I'm feeling overwhelmed? When my teen is overwhelmed?
- Role model self-compassion: How do I respond to myself when I make mistakes?
- Where do I find myself repeating negative cycles of interaction with my teen? How can I help shift these patterns?
- How can I move from criticism and judgment to curiosity and admiration for my teen and for myself?
- What support and self-care do I need to feel more equipped to manage stress & anxiety?



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