

# Beyond Boundaries

An integrative strategy



Erasmus+



HET BALANSKE



# Strategic project Erasmus+

- 2 year project: October 2017 - September 2019
- Financed by Erasmus+
- Partnership Na Tak & Het Balanske
  - Previous exchange projects
  - 1st strategic project
- 3 stages



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  - An integrative approach
  - Own skillset
  - Support from colleagues and employers
  - Working with context
- Workshops



# Target group and goal of the project

- Volunteers and professionals working with children, youngsters and adults with mental disability and/or autism.
- To increase confidence in professionals and volunteers when working with people showing problem behaviour.

# Project Design

- ❑ 4 workshops
- ❑ Volunteers and professionals
- ❑ Implementing strategies
- ❑ Evaluation with project management team
- ❑ Follow-up on strategy with interviews
- ❑ Adjust follow-up where necessary

# Theoretical framework

- Based on 4 workshops
- Integration of offered information to implement one general approach

# Problem behaviour

- Definition Erik Emerson:
  - “Culturally abnormal behaviour of such an intensity, frequency or duration that the **physical safety** of the person or others is likely to be placed in serious jeopardy, or behaviour which is likely to seriously **limit** the use of, or result in the person being **denied access to, ordinary community facilities.**”

# Mental disability

- Being able to learn:
  - Is a slower process
  - Stops earlier - hits a ceiling



Severity	Speed of development: in 1 year progress of...	Ceiling
Mild (IQ 55-70)	7-8 months	7-12 years: concrete operational Concepts attached to concrete situations
Moderate (IQ 40-55)	5-6 months	4-7 years: Preoperational Intuitive thought - complex abstract thought is difficult and illogical connections can be made
Severe (IQ 25-40)	3-4 months	2-4 years: preoperational Symbolic function - can see connections between events in the here and now
Profound (IQ < 25)	1-2 months	< 2 jaar: sensorimotor Thinking = acting

# Mental disability

- Coping
  - In need of a support figure
  - Adaptation phase
  - Attachment phase
  - Individuation phase

## Role of support figure

Adaptation (0-6 months)

Support figure takes care of all the necessary daily things

Attachment (6-18 months)

Proximity of support figure is needed to be able to function

Individuation (+18 months)

Gradually learning to function apart from the support figure

# Autism

- Congenital brain defect
- Affecting the way people **think**
  - Problem with processing information
- Triad of autistic symptoms showing in **behaviour**
  - Social interaction
  - Communication
  - Imagination

# Autism problem areas

- Sensory hypersensitivity
  - Stimuli are registered too often/too many at once or too intensively (louder or brighter)
- Sensory hyposensitivity
  - Stimuli are registered less often/less intense or not at all (look for extra stimuli, possibly through behaviour)

# Autism problem areas

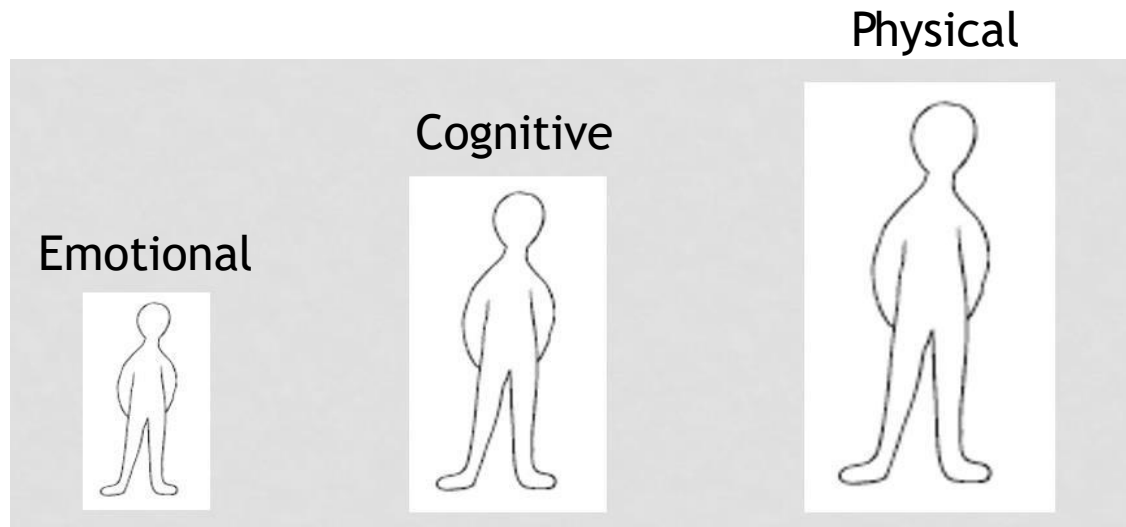
- Lack of theory of mind
  - mindblindness: clueless toward what other people feel, mean and think
- Weak central coherence
  - Attention to detail without seeing the bigger picture
- Executive disfunction
  - Unable to change strategies when facing a problem

# Needs

- What do people with autism and/or mental disability need?
  - Protection against too many/too intense stimuli - sensory profile
  - Guidance toward adjusted stimuli and activities
  - Clarification: what is expected? What is the bigger picture?
  - Predictability

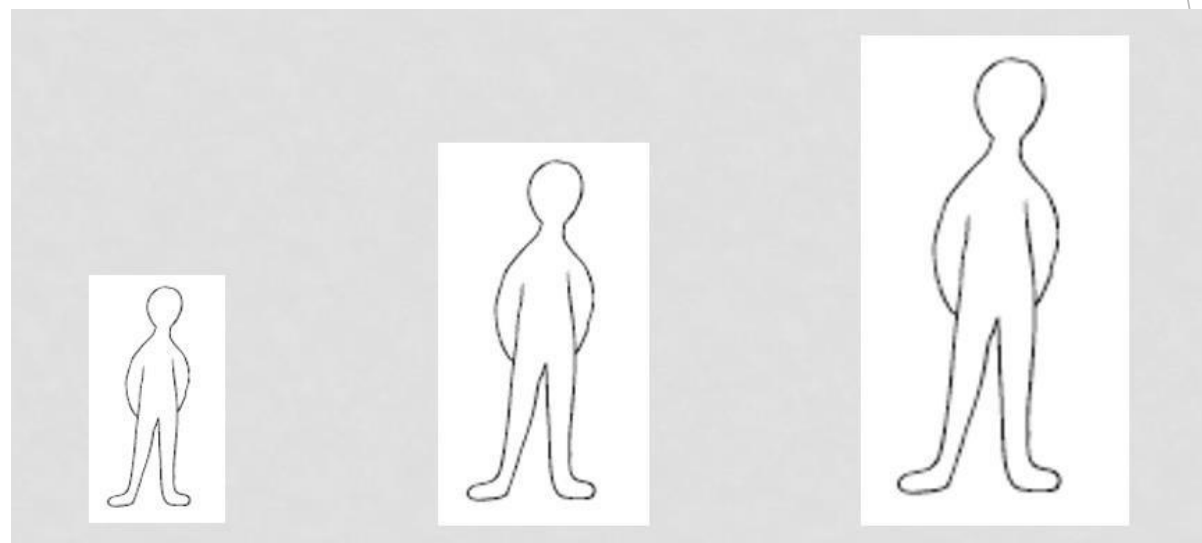
# Stages of development

- Development happens on several levels and in different stages.
  - Emotional
  - Cognitive
  - Physical
- Any discrepancy between these stages can lead to problems.





# Example of stages of development in mental disability and/or autism



Emotional Development  
eg: 6-18m

Cognitive development  
eg: 2-3y

Physical development  
eg: 19y

## Influence of stress

- Stop making progress in development or regression.
- Difficulty communicating about feelings or thoughts - stress remains unresolved and shows in behavior.
- Need to intervene before stress gets critical and leads to problems.

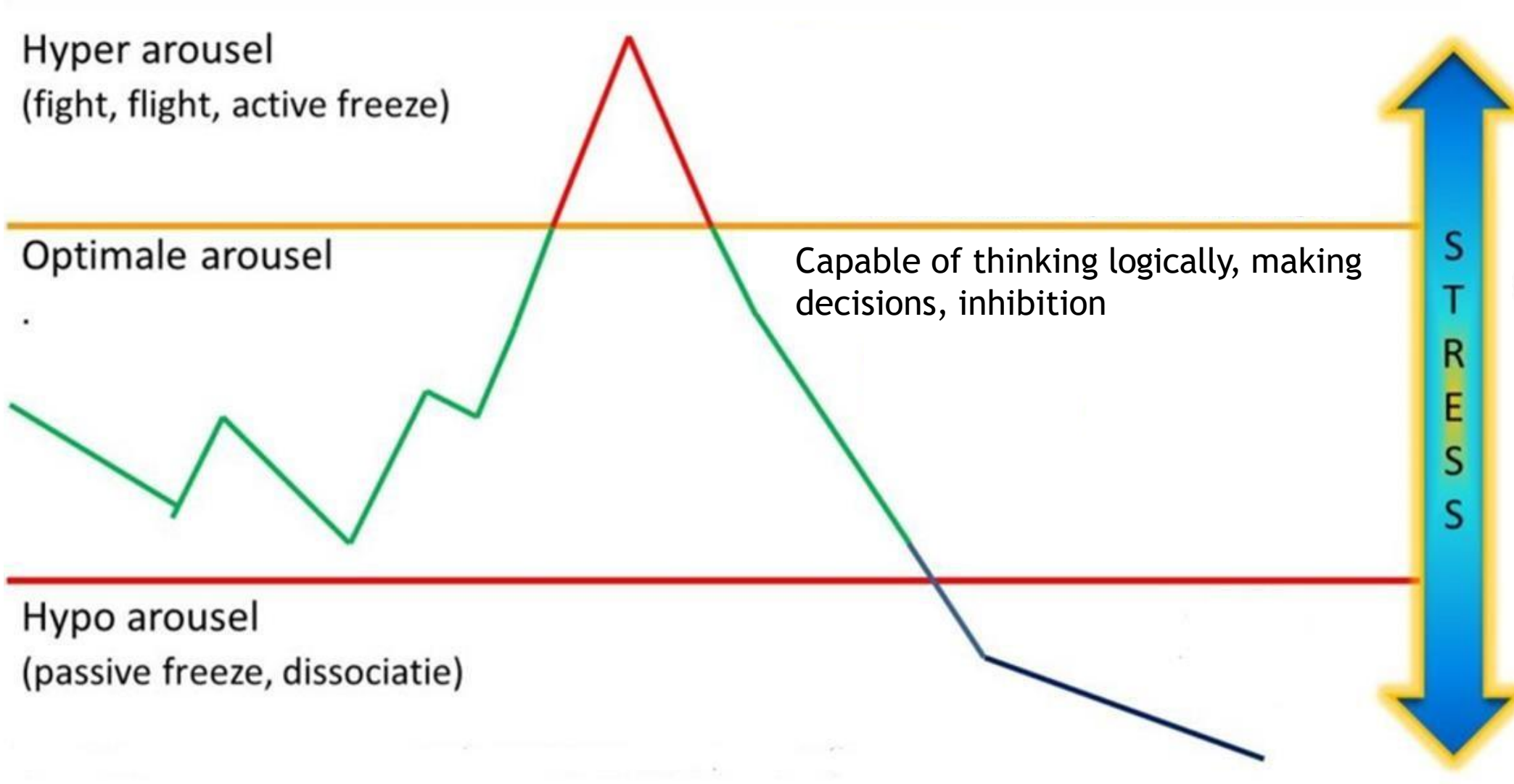
## Influence of stress

- Problem behavior is merely the tip of the iceberg - it's a symptom of underlying issues
  - Anxiety
  - Feeling powerless
  - Feeling empty
  - Being bored
  - ...

 Stress



# Window of tolerance



# Fight or flight

Stress reaction	Fight	Flight	Freeze (active/passive)
Activity	Shaking Overstretching Aggressive Refusal	Running away from the situation	Shaking Sobbing Crying
Verbal	Provoking Calling names Screaming	Making up alternatives Sacrificing someone else	Reassuring Laughing Disengaging
Non-verbal	Clenching fists Being alert Angry	Not answering Running away Pulling out of the situation	Giving up Drooping face and body

## Influence of stress

- Smaller window of tolerance leads to more things causing stress
  - Leads to overstimulation
    - More difficulty staying in contact
    - Less information gets processed
    - Less adaptation to the environment

 **Behaviour problems**

## Influence of stress

- Need to know triggers for stress - **prevention**
- Need to intervene in an early stage to prevent crisis - **action**
- Need to realise limited possibilities when in crisis + need for reflection after - **repair**

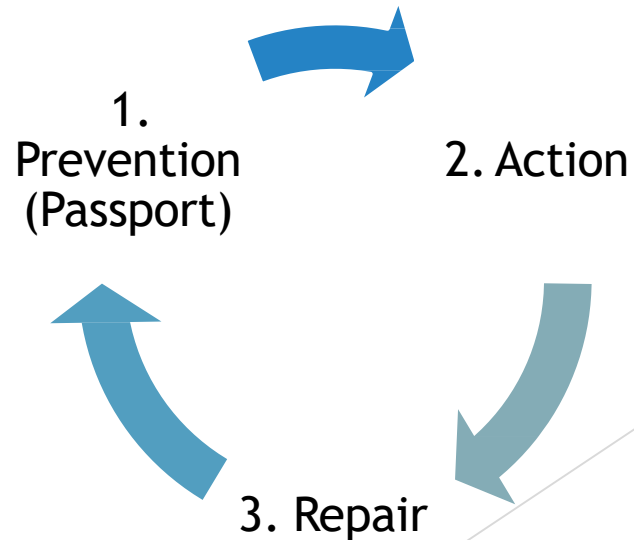
# Dealing with problem behavior

- Use
  - An integrative approach
  - Own skillset
  - Support from colleagues and employers
  - Working with context



# Integrative approach

- Supported by the organization you work for and shared by colleagues
  - Prevention
  - Action
  - Repair



## Skillset of professional or volunteer

- Observation skills (verbal and non-verbal)
- Calm, predictable and structuring attitude
- Versatile and adaptable to changes in situations and behaviour of clients
- Awareness of style and possibility to reflect on this
- Will to improve this skillset

## Support from colleagues and employers

- Learn how to deal with these situations better through intervision
- Meet regularly to discuss and evaluate approach of clients with team
- Vent about difficult situations and clients to reduce own stress

## Working with context

- Parents or caretakers - work together to create a passport with necessary information as well as transfer information between contexts
- Parents are experts on their children - importance of an intake procedure or possibility of asking extra information.