

“Beyond Academics: The Relationship Blueprint” Live Q&A

This is a summary of the Q&A session held after participants watched the pre-recorded video discussion between Dr Billy Garvey and John Hendry OAM on 19 November 2025, as part of the Parents Victoria AGM. You can view the video on the [Parents Victoria website](#).



Question 1

Sometimes parents say my child’s behaviour is misunderstood – how do I start a productive conversation with the school?

Parents and teachers need to get together and develop a relationship where they trust one another and work together when children make mistakes.

Billy used the term “repair”. [Visit the RbE website](#) for information on how to repair relationships.

We need to recognise when there is a mistake and work together to work through it.

Parents need to be able to trust that teachers are doing the best they can. The more information they have about the child the better – as they are then informed. Especially around how the child may deal with the mistakes they make.

Question 2

What is the best way to raise concerns without damaging parent/teacher relationships? For example, situations/relationships might already be fractured or strained.

Tonality is important and emotive ways of expressing varies across cultures.

Contact with the school should not only be centred on mistakes, errors or failures. It should be a constant stream (steady) where successes are recognized and good things are reported. Parents and teachers can pat each other on the back! The relationships of course will be ‘up and down’. But if they are all ‘down’ - always negative - relationships turn sour. John referenced Barbara Frederickson’s Broaden and Build theory, which suggests that experiencing at least three positive emotions for every negative one is key for flourishing and resilience. Positive relationships outweigh the negative ones, and this is far more productive.

For more information on Broaden and Build, see:

- [Penn State University open access textbook](#)
- [US National Library of Medicine article](#)

Question 3

Attendance – School refusal/school can't. Gail commented - there is a range of barriers to school attendance.

John responded that Billy did mention Berry Street and relational dislocation. If students are fearful they will not want to attend school. They react by flight, fight or freeze - the reptilian brain is operating. **We need to replace fear with hope.** Friendship is important too. Developing a resilient mindset is key (see this [information sheet from clinical psychologist Andrew Fuller](#)). When there is hope, children will deal with mis-judgements and mistakes. Resilience is the restoration of hope.

Question 4

When a child is struggling with self-regulation and is overwhelmed with emotion – what are some basic steps to be employed to validate and calm them? E.g. tone of voice, phrases, pausing – does this work?

Yes and as Billy said – you must go to the child, not walk away from them. Deeply understanding the cause of emotional dislocation. This goes to Marc Brackett's RULER theory, an evidence-based approach to social and emotional learning developed at the Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence. RULER is an acronym for Recognising, Understanding, Labelling, Expressing, Regulating.

RULER involves recognizing the emotional state. You understand it. What caused it. Label the anger. Expressing it in a way which does no harm to you or others. This enables anger to be regulated. You are then in a position to regulate.

[More information on Marc Brackett's website.](#)

Comment from John Hendry regarding "Attachment"

"Attachment" is also important and is about being insecure or secure. 60% of students of all ages are secure (in a social or learning circumstance). But 40% of students believe they are not able to be secure. Children who are resilient say "and" when they make a mistake. It releases them to learn from the mistake. Non resilient children say "but". For example – But, it was too hard. Or I was too tired. They are looking for excuses. Billy made the point of going to the child, not going away from them.

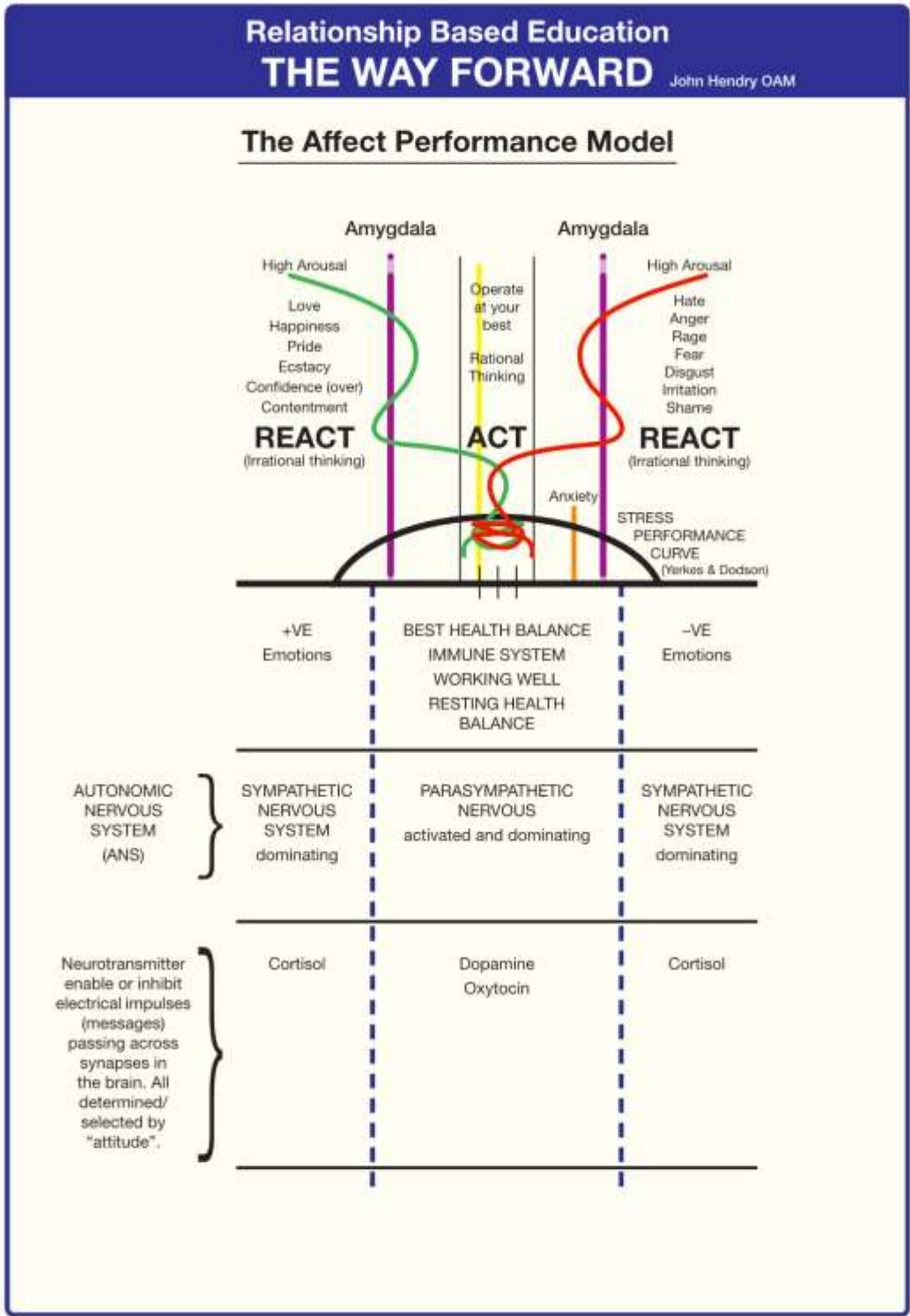
[More information about Attachment on Psychology Today website.](#)

Question 5

John can you explain Affect Performance? It's very been useful for PV.

John explained that it's based on positive and negative emotions. There is a narrow 'channel' where we perform at our best. The further to the either side of the channel we go, we move away from making sensible and rational decisions (see below diagram). We've all "lost it" at some point in time. Or we've been over-confident. We need to be able to pick up when children are cross,

confused or over-confident – parents are good at this. “Affect” is a feeling, which is emotion. If you are angry - the brain is unhelpful. (Refer to *Amygdala hijack* on [Healthline](#)). Again – like Billy says - you need to go to the child. Calm the child to come back into the middle (“ACT”) channel so they can make good decisions. We have to calm the child (or ourselves) down, or we do silly things. Parents and teachers can use the same processes and work together. Watching children carefully and being here to assist. Some people ‘fly off the handle’ quicker than others. Social and emotional learning is about this. Children practise this. **Relationships - we live in them.**



Question 6

Since Covid there seems to be an increased number of children with behavioural vulnerability. Schools are dealing with violence. What could be put in place to support teachers, schools, parents/carers?

Isolation of Covid meant children didn't develop social skills. Dislocation is that students haven't been through the initial relational learning steps. The trainer wheels have been taken off too early. Parents and teachers need to discuss this. It's simplistic to say they are "covid kids". Working together to come up with a process where all are working from the same base and using the same process. Easily understood by the child.

John mentioned Billy's book, [Ten Things I Wish You Knew About Your Child's Mental Health](#)

Comment / observation from a participant

This is so foundational what Billy and John describe. Transparent conversations are important. Children don't always know what's happening to them. But it's important they know and understand they are not bad, stupid etc. And for parents it's a powerful opportunity to let children know and acknowledge and inform children on what's happening to them. **Sharing insights between parents and teachers is important. It's a game changer.**

John agreed and added that listening deeply and carefully is so important. Don't jump in too early and make judgements before we have all the information. That's why going to the child and spending time like Billy says, is crucial. Don't rush things. You show you care. It's the [fifth element of a quality relationship](#) – **empathy** (understanding relational circumstances) – empathy action through care. If you're not going to the child, you're not really convincing them you care. Billy's point about soothing by going to them. It takes time and it's time well spent.

Our audience member added regarding valuing the child - they matter. And even through challenging behaviours!

John agreed and said you are restoring hope and making them resilient. **Hope must not be taken away (stolen) – it's almost impossible to restore it.**

Final comments from Parents Victoria CEO Gail McHardy

PV will be working hard in 2026, to provide [Relationship based Education](#) support to schools and families around all of these topics/questions, for example:

- The "how-to" of practical supports for schools to have quality relationships and engagement with families.
- And for families – the "how-to" have a conversation and quality relationship with your school.

PV will continue advocating for **family engagement liaison staff** in schools - to be the conduit to support schools, staff and parents to have quality relationships.