

Emotional and Mental Health after Cancer



Sonia Venkatraman, Ph.D.
Seattle Children's Hospital
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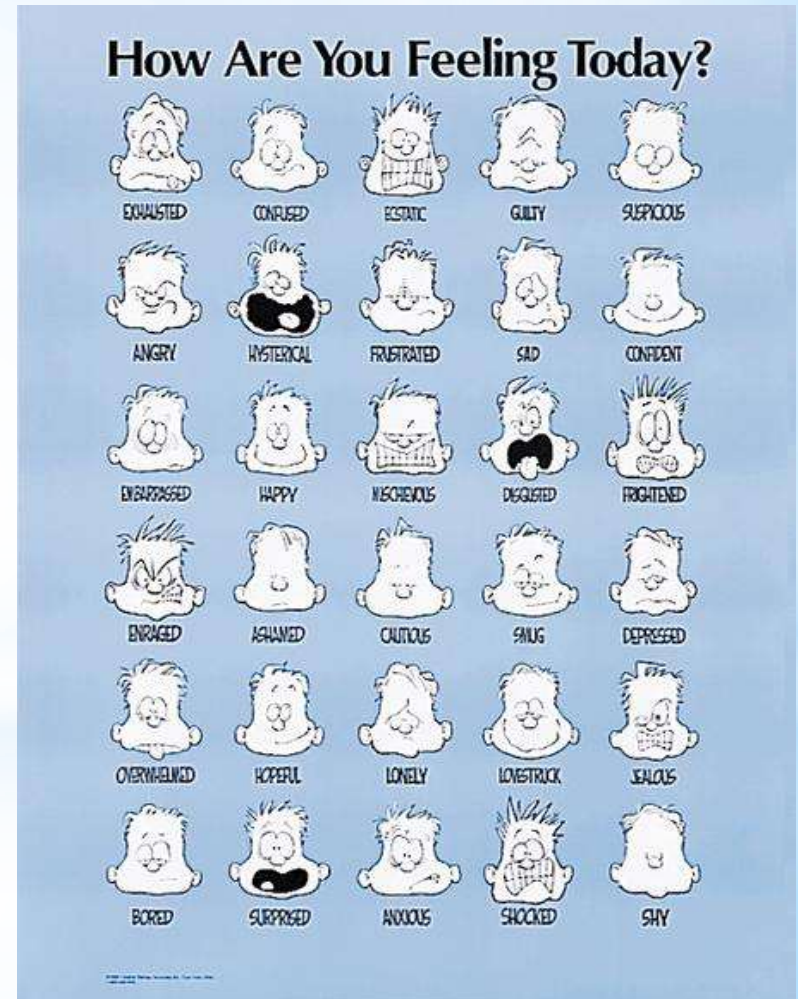
Overview

- What are emotions and how do they affect us?
- Emotional and cognitive development in kids
- What happens in cancer
- The family context
- Tips and tools

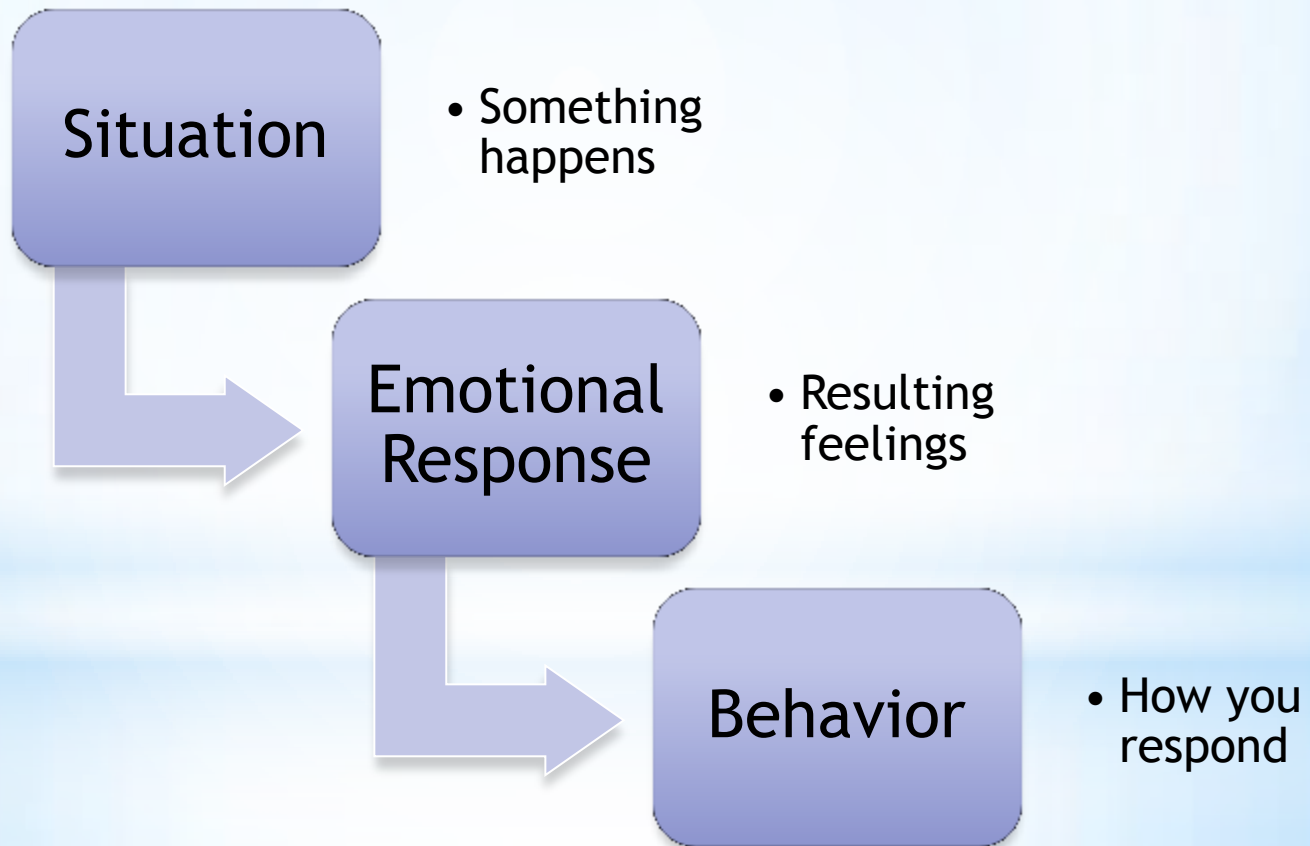
Emotional and Mental Health...

what does that even mean?

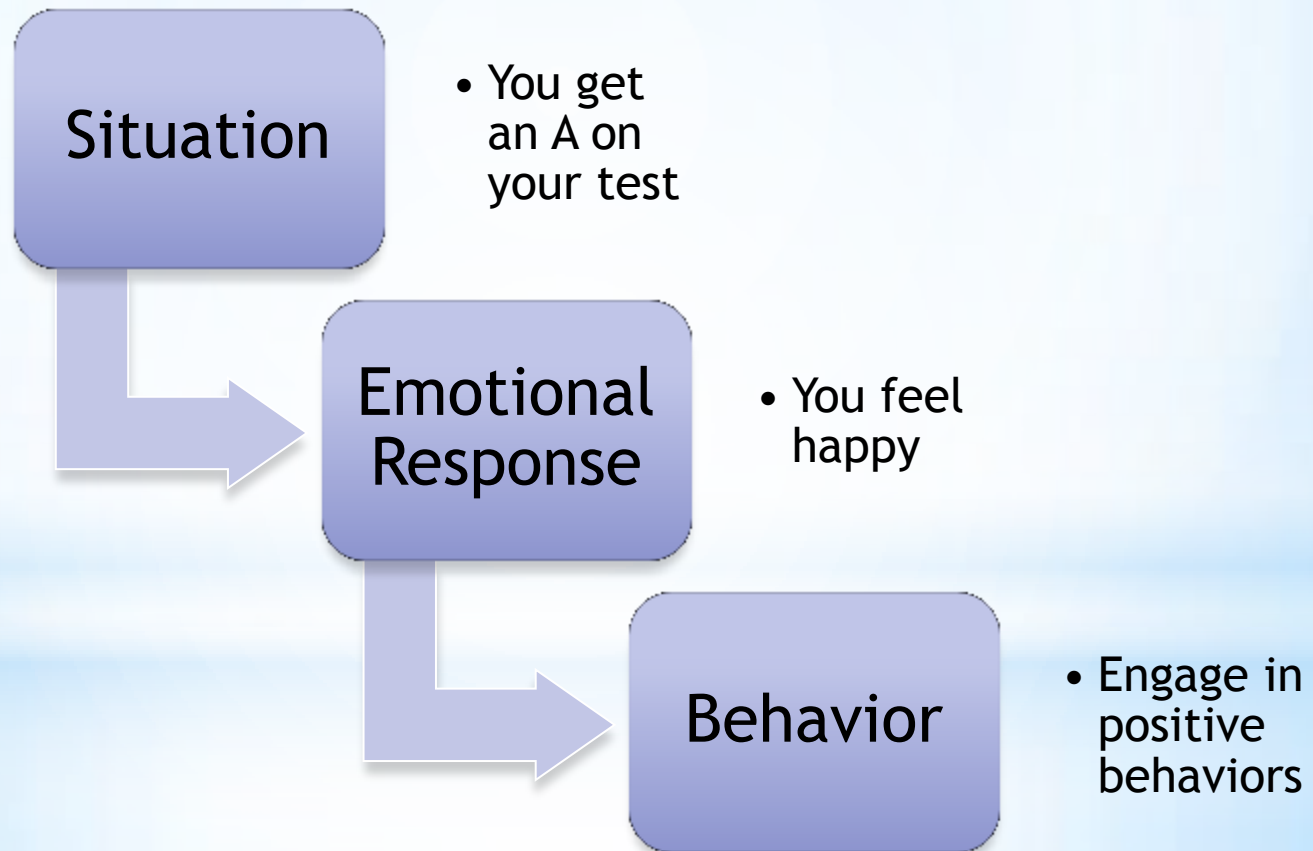
- Everyone experiences a range of emotions
- Normal responses to different situations



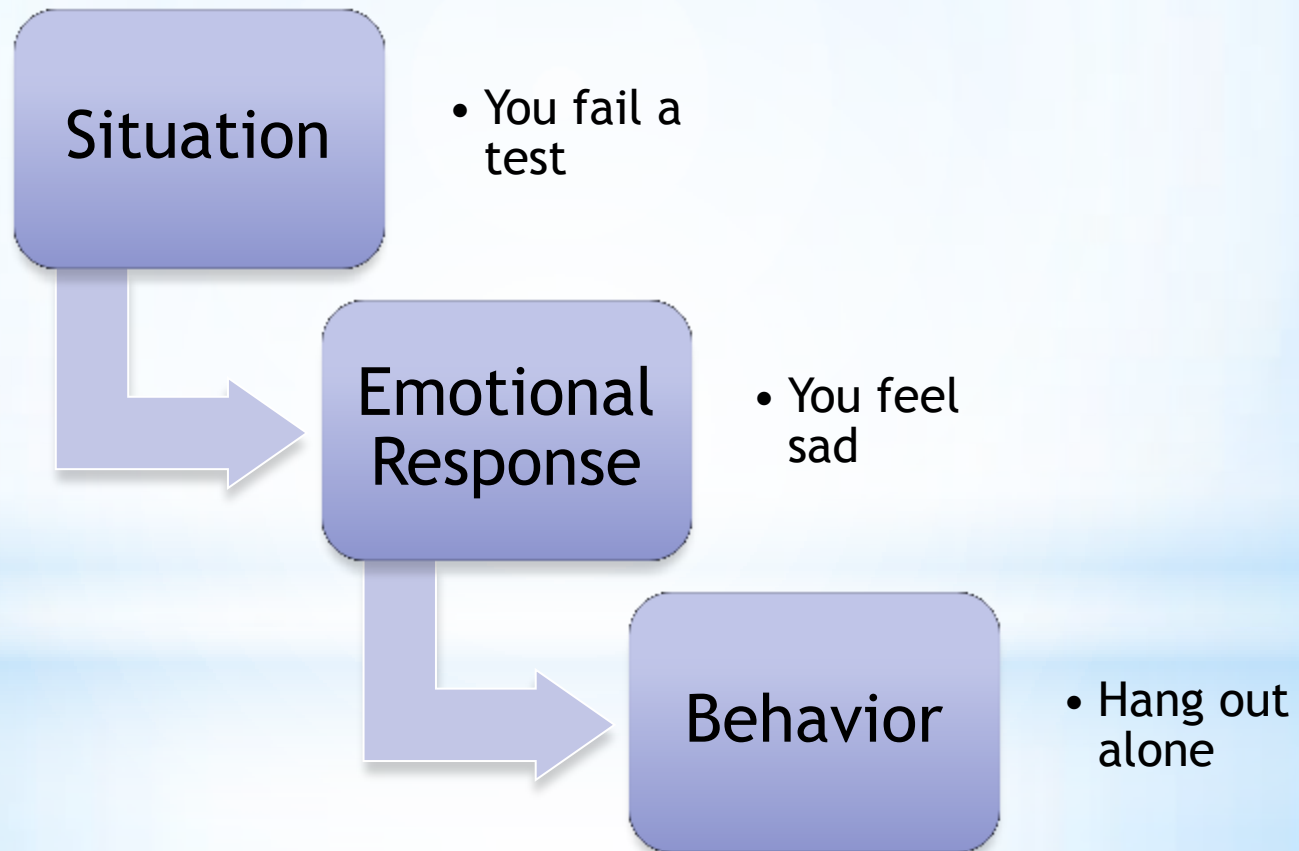
Emotions can be triggered by situations



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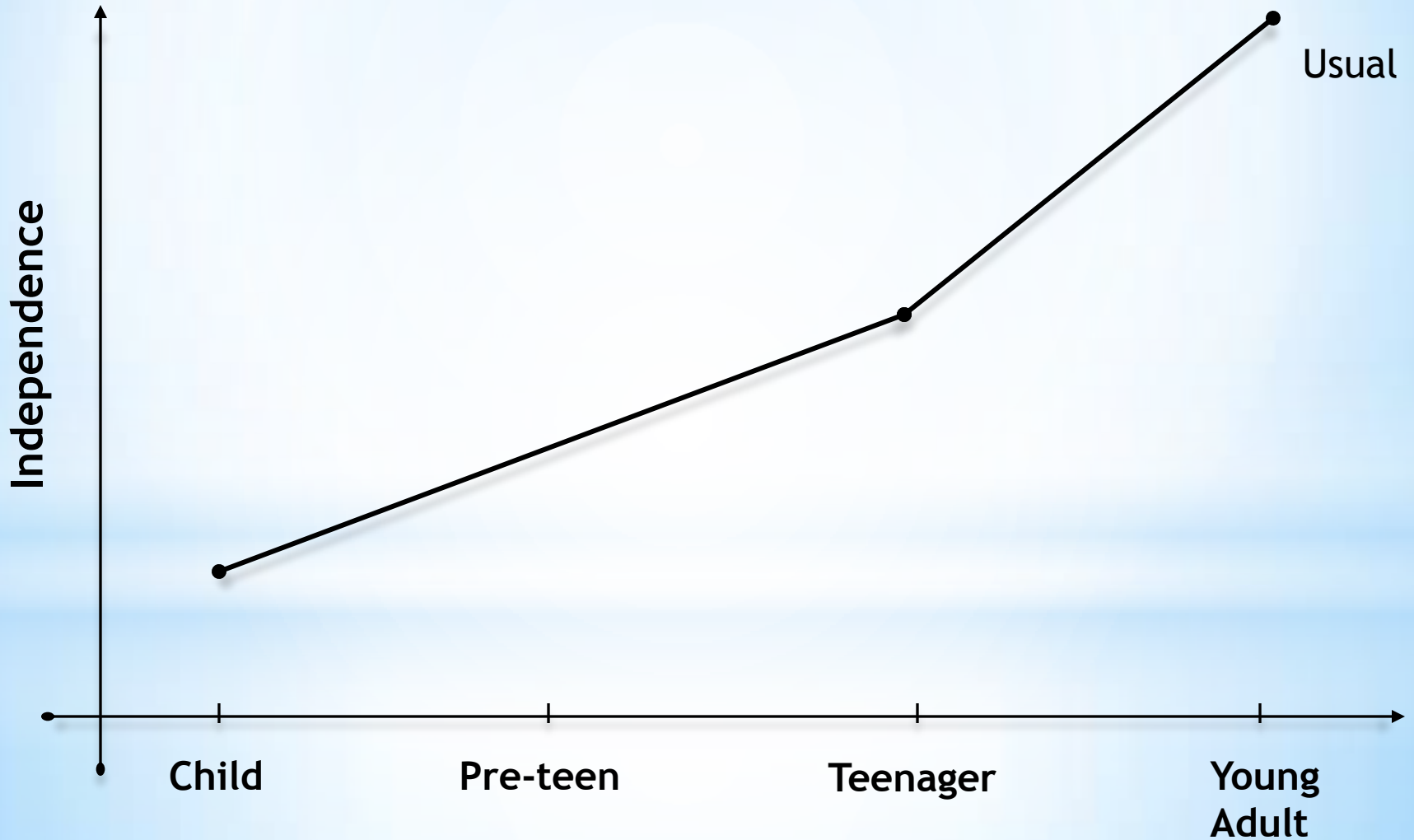
Emotions can be triggered by situations



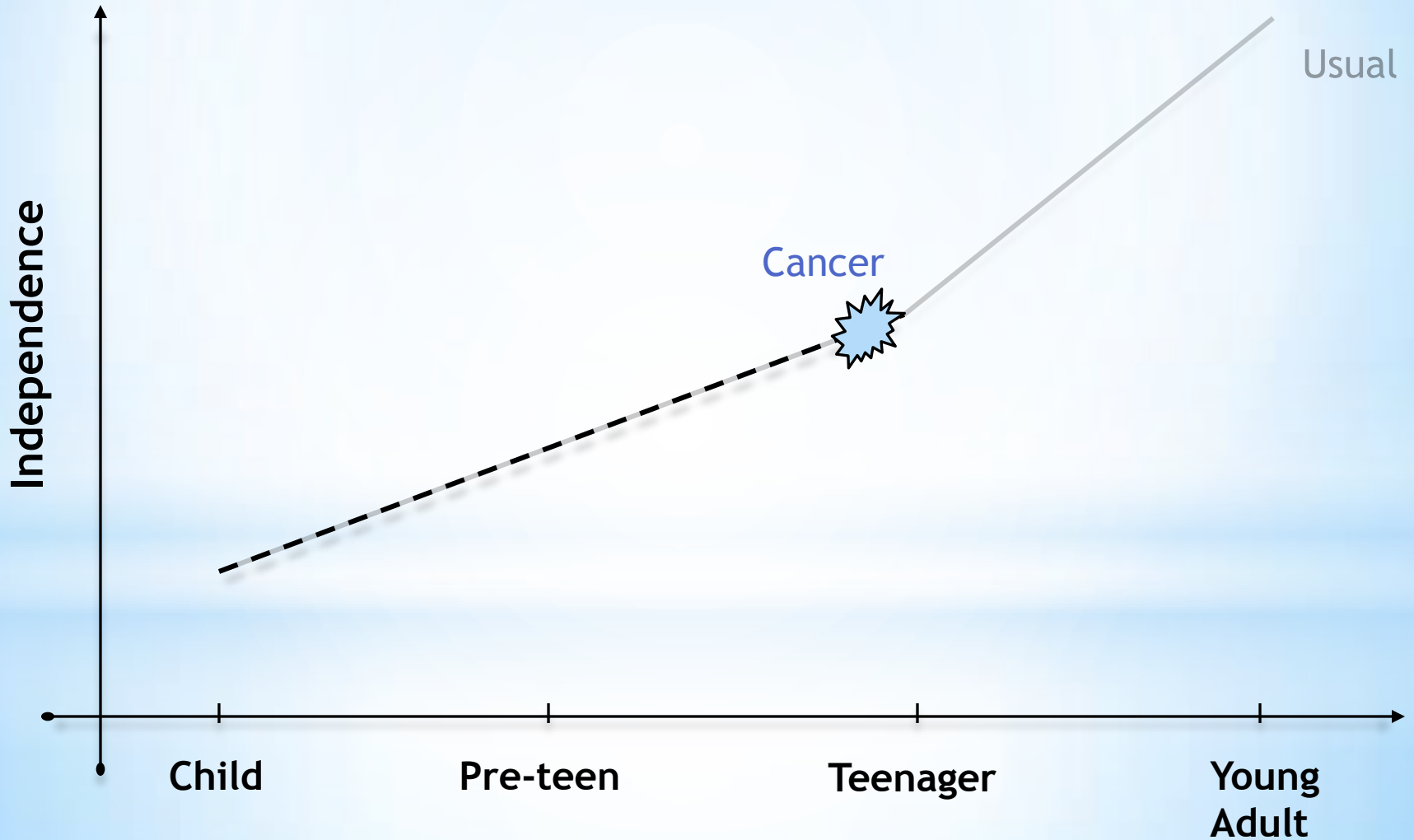
General development in kids

- Start to grow intellectually and think about things in different ways
- Learn to balance friends and family
- Learn to adjust to society's behavioral expectations
- Figure out who you are and what's important to you
- Prepare to become an adult

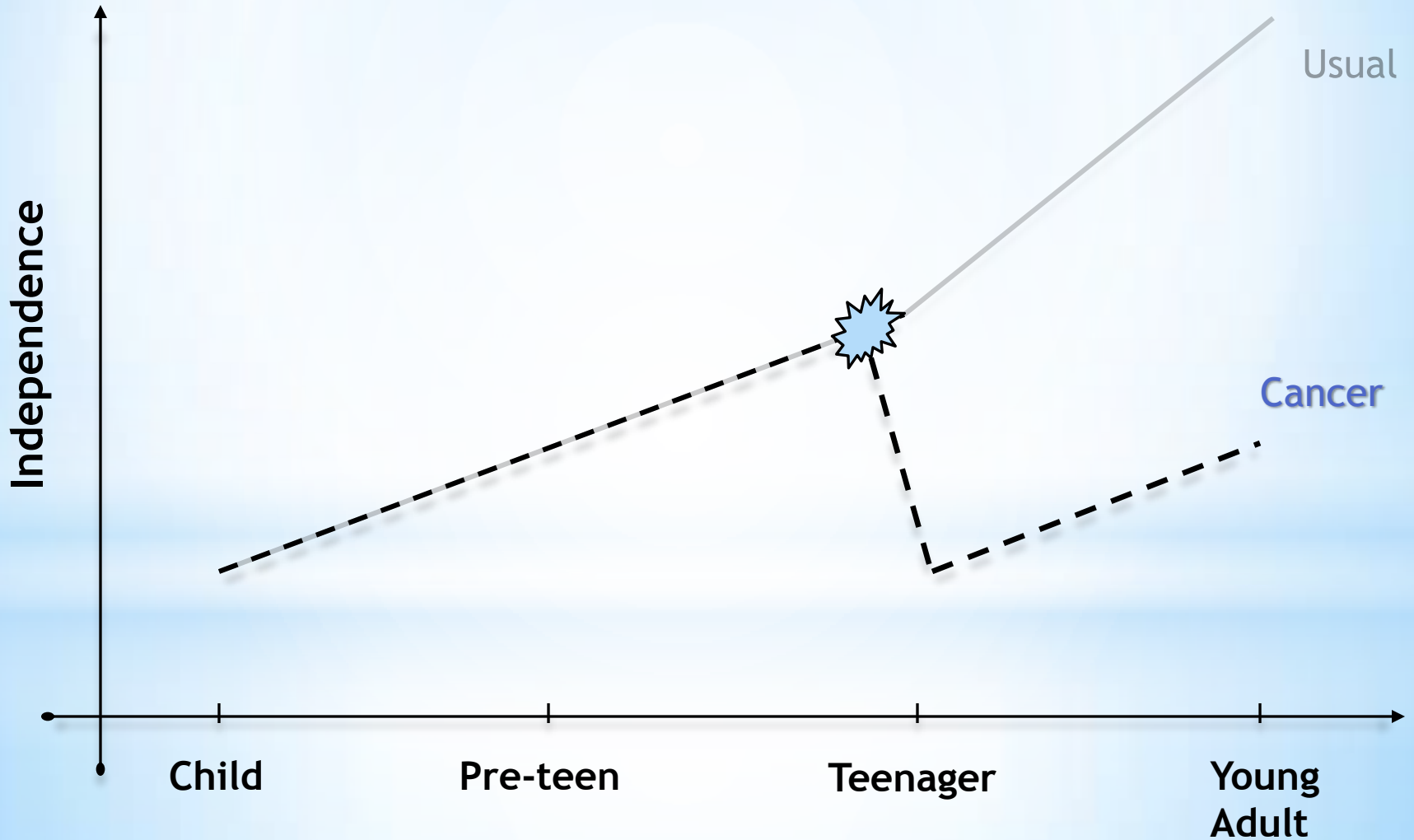
The developmental trajectory



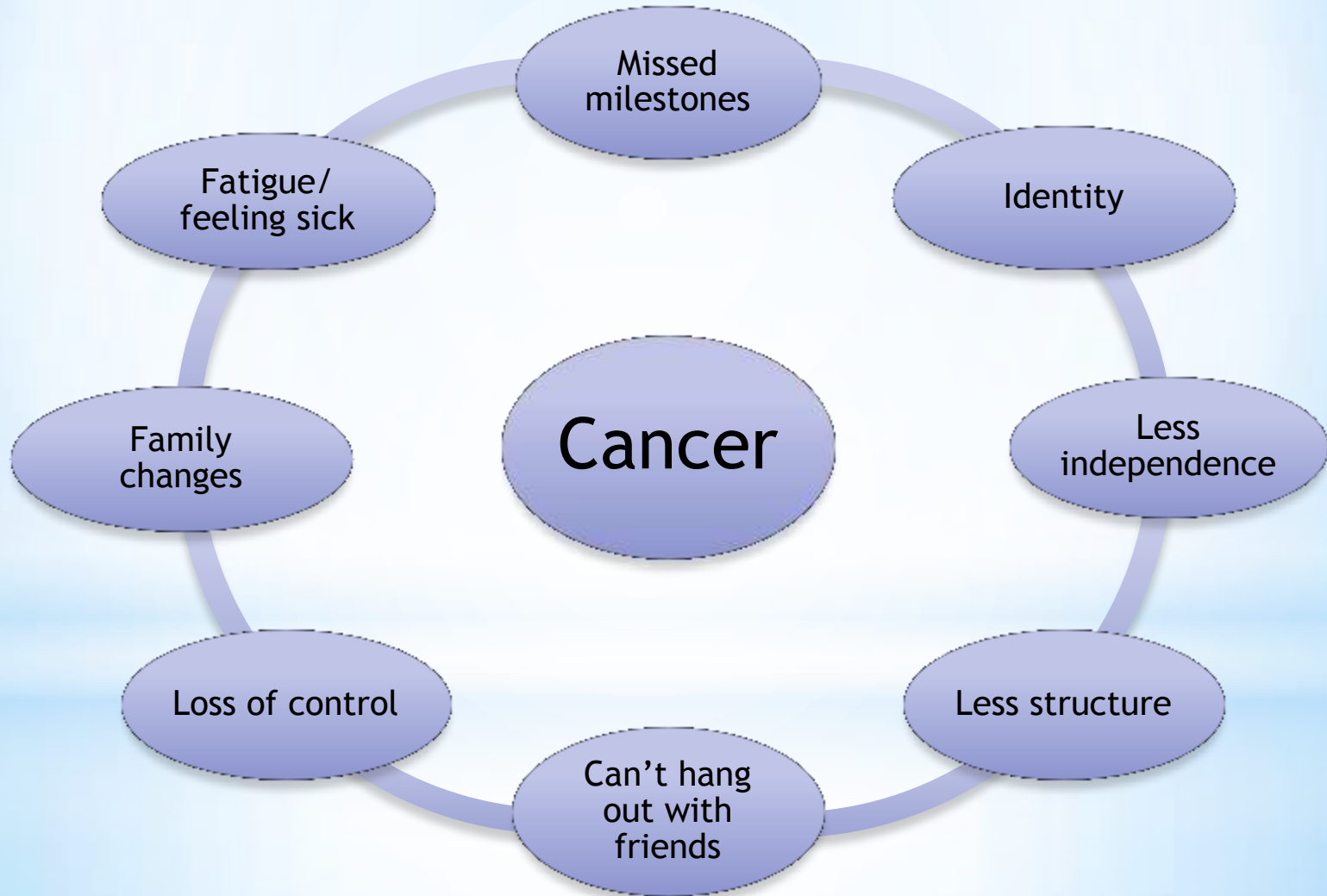
The developmental trajectory



The developmental trajectory



Cancer changes things



Issues for the child post-cancer

- Developing your new identity
- Reintegrating with friends
- Fitting in back at school
- Ongoing medical follow-ups, medications
- Being independent again

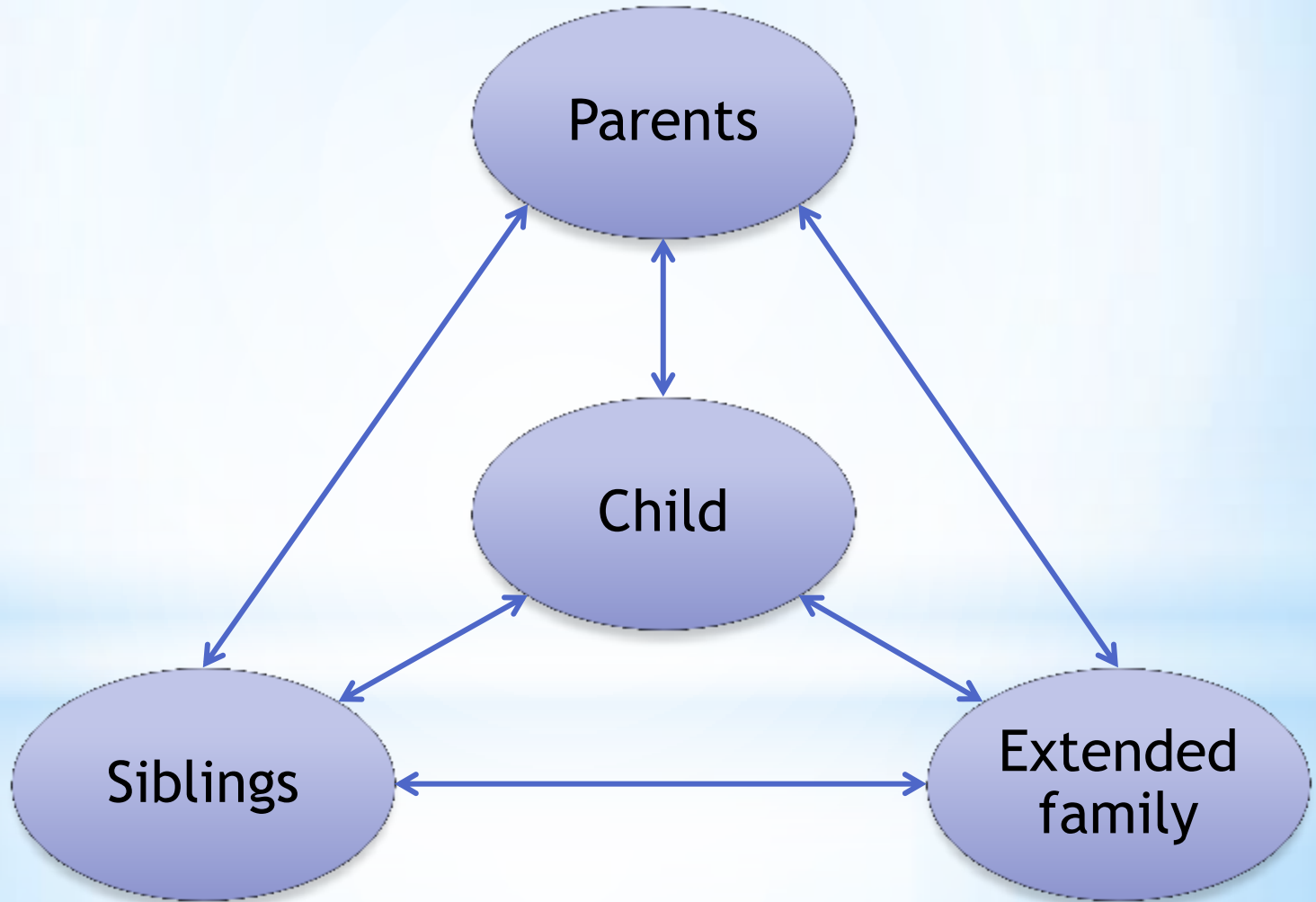
Issues for the parents post-cancer

- Balancing parenting vs. protecting
 - Allowing your child to be an active participant in medical decision-making
 - Helping them take the lead on making decisions about their lives
 - Encouraging social activities
- Dealing with your own worries and uncertainty

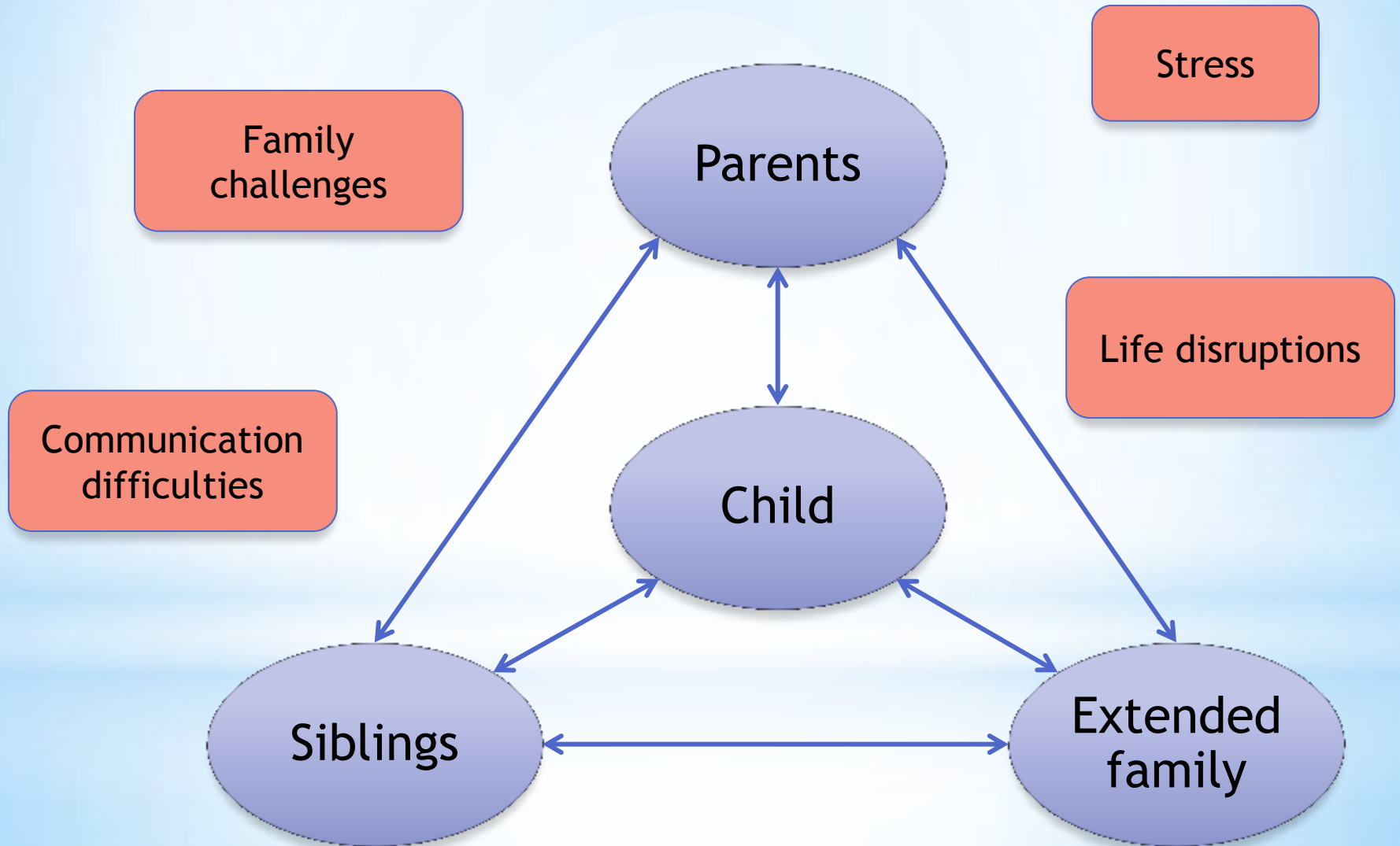
And sometimes...

- Most common diagnoses
 - Adjustment
 - Mood (depression)
 - Anxiety
 - Post-traumatic stress symptoms
 - Post-traumatic stress disorder

The family context



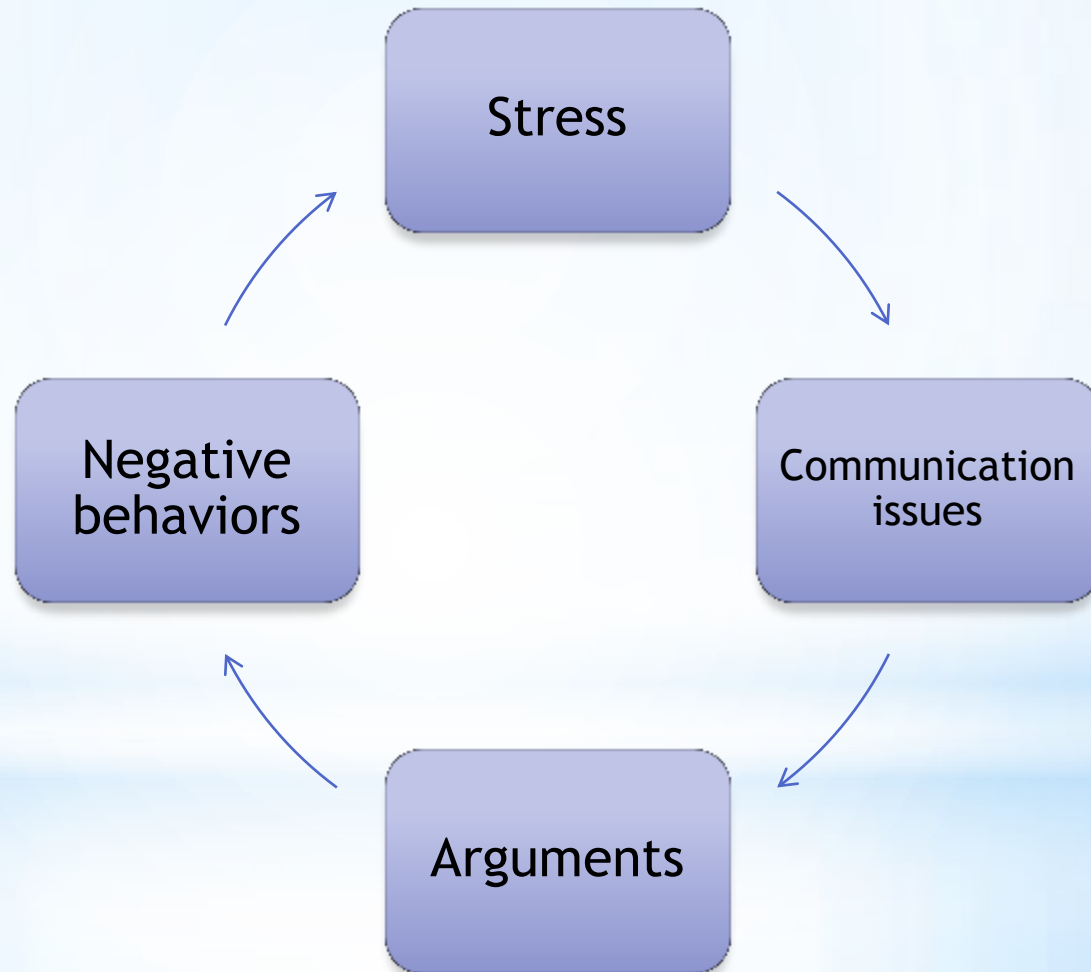
The family context



Stress and the family context



A stress cycle



So what can you do?



Put cancer on the table, not under it

For parents – for your kids

- Leave communication open
- Be aware of your child's feelings – and ask!
- Validate your child's feelings
- Help increase autonomy, control
- Establish routines collaboratively
- Problem-solving

For parents – for yourselves

- Be aware of your own feelings and reactions
- Self-care
- Social support
- Maintain your relationships and friendships
- Let go of Superman/Superwoman

For kids

- Share your feelings
- Ask for help when you need it
- Establish routines to help you keep on top of things
- Find ways to have mastery over your day-to-day activities
- Remember to keep doing fun things

Structure, structure, structure!

- Build routines
 - Morning
 - School
 - After school
 - Mealtimes
 - Bedtime

Dealing with stress

- Behavioral activation
- Relaxation/deep breathing/guided imagery
- Talk it out
- Distraction

Problem-solving

“RIBEYE”

- R – Relax
- I – Identify the problem
- B – Brainstorm options
- E – Evaluate options (pros/cons)
- Y – Say “Yes” to one
- E – Encourage/Execute/Evaluate

When to seek professional help

- Symptoms are causing significant difficulties in one or more settings
- Child asks for help
- Strain in the parent-child relationship stemming from adjustment issues
- Parent or marital adjustment difficulties are beginning to affect child/family
- Sibling is experiencing concerning changes in behavior

“We acquire the strength we have overcome.”

Ralph Waldo Emerson