38th Edition

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THE PLAY LAB FOUNDATION'S

LEARNING LAB

WHEN REGULATION LEAVES THE ROOM

Have you ever had an emotional encounter with someone—whether in person, over the phone, or through text/email—and when you go back to recall it, you can't remember what you said, what they said, or even what sparked it in the first place?

Even more telling—when it's written, you go back and see typos on both sides.

At some point in that exchange, your brain sensed danger. Your amygdala was hijacked.

And when that happens, we're not receiving or retaining information the way we would if we were regulated. In fact, in highly stressful moments, we may not be processing much at all.

It's no different for children.

The moment may look different—because it's shaped by age and stage—but when their brain senses danger, survival takes over. There's no listening. And there certainly aren't lessons being learned in that moment.

After a meltdown*, they may not remember the nuances the way we might expect. And if we're being honest, if we became dysregulated too...we might not either.

We both deserve grace.

The brain was just doing what it was meant to do.

*More on meltdowns later in the series.

THE DISH ON DYSREGULATION, PT. 1

A 5-PART LEARNING LAB

Being in relationship with children for over three decades, one thing I've come to recognize is when a child is dysregulated. I can feel when a child has moved past a healthy point of struggle—when the experience has stopped being fun and they're moving beyond what they can hold.

What I've also learned is how deeply contextual dysregulation can be. It's shaped by the child, their neurotype, the moment, and a range of underlying factors—which can make it hard to name while it's happening.

But this is a learning lab—learning is what we do here.

So with that in mind, I've created a 5-part Learning Lab on dysregulation. We're going to slow this down and take a closer look at what's actually happening beneath the surface, so our responses can be rooted in understanding, not urgency.

Because when a brain senses danger, survival takes over. And when survival takes over, learning takes a back seat.

A brain under stress learns less.

And if that's true, then how we show up in those moments matters.