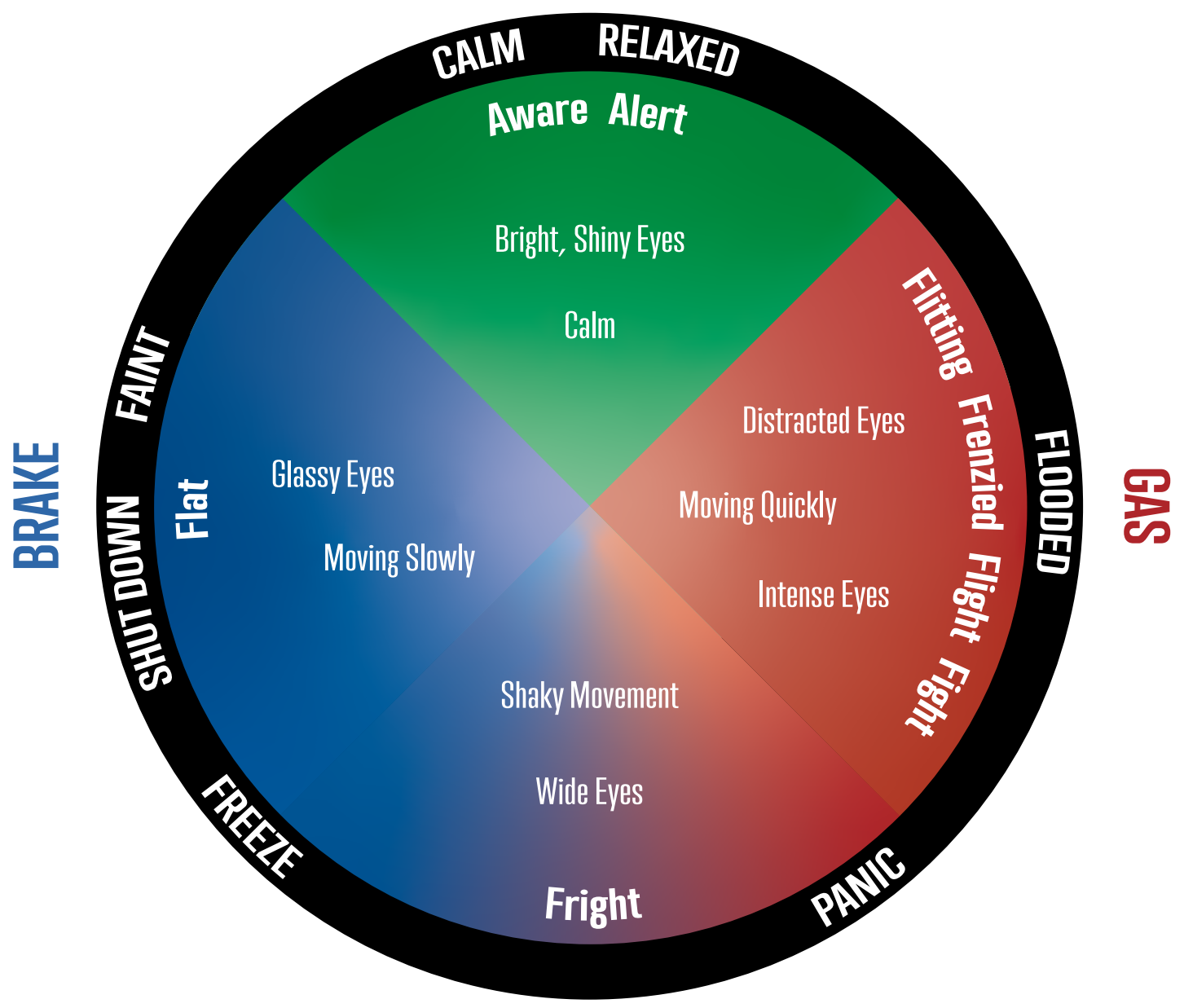


THE NEURORELATIONAL FRAMEWORK'S Are you in the GREEN?

“JUST RIGHT”



BRAKE & GAS



THE NEURORELATIONAL FRAMEWORK'S

Colour Zone Pie

The NRF uses this pie diagram to show the five coloured zones we all can be in while we are awake during the day.

The **green zone** is when we feel *calm, present, and able to both learn and to connect with others*. This is when we are each at our best and we can tell that our children are 'present' and engaging with us. In this state we have bright shiny eyes, and our bodies are calm with just the right amount of movement to match the situation.

In the **red zone**, the gas pedal is on in our nervous system. There are two sides to the red zone. In the **positive** red zone, children move quickly, maybe impulsively. It is hard to sit still. We call this *flitting*. Sometime in the positive red zone we may be super silly, over excited, with have exuberant energy. We refer to this as *frenzied* behaviour. It is hard to get focussed in this state. Sometimes we can flit and be frenzied at the same time. Eyes look distracted in these states.

The **negative** side of the red zone, our bodies are moving quickly, but we may be kicking, biting, spitting, hitting, or rolling on the floor or stomping feet. A popular term for red zone behaviour is 'temper tantrums'. This is what is known as *fight or flight*. This is the most common stress response that we might label as non-compliant or bad behaviour. A person may protest and say 'no' in the red zone. During this stress response eye gaze is often intense, but a person may also avert eye gaze.

In the **blue zone** the brake pedal is on. In this state our bodies are slowed down. Our facial expressions can be flat with low muscle tone and glassy eyes. We refer to this state as *flat*. The blue zone has its own continuum. Sometimes we feel sad or bored in the blue zone. We can disengage and withdraw from others, be in our own world or 'zoned out'. Shut down refers to a state where we are quietly immobilized by the brake pedal. We may feel a heaviness in our bodies, like we are weighted down. In its most extreme form, shut down is where animals may 'feign death'. Animals and people are not doing this on purpose; this is an involuntary survival response of our nervous system.

The **combo zone** is where the brake and gas pedal are on together, in varying amounts and combinations. It's hard to think about them both being on at the same time, but combinations exist where some parts of our bodies are slowing down while other parts are speeding up. In the combo zone there is a continuum of anxiety and fright with hyper-vigilance where we carefully watch the environment around us. There is an active side to the combo zone where we are more agitated in our bodies - children may be whiny or clingy. Sometimes this can escalate to panic; movements are shaky, and our eyes may wide open. There is a quieter side of the combo zone continuum where our bodies are more still, but fear or anxiety can be seen on the face. If we measured heart rate and blood pressure, they would both be up, and our guts are often churning in this state. We call children who are in this quiet state, 'slow to warm up' to new situations or people. A more extreme version of this quiet combo zone is freeze. This is the 'deer in the head lights' type of freeze. One cannot move one's body, but movement occurs in the face with wide eyes and raised eyebrows and there is activation inside the body.

In summary, if we are feeling safe with manageable challenges, and if we have had healthy sleep the night before, we can maintain the green zone for most of the day, with smooth transitions in and out of stress responses. Our nervous system is adapting what is going on around us throughout the day.