

# **FAMILY NUTRITION: FOSTERING AGENCY AND EMPOWERMENT THROUGH A SYSTEMS LENS**

M a r y B r i m m e r , M S W  
E F N E P N u t r i t i o n E d u c a t o r  
C C E U l s t e r

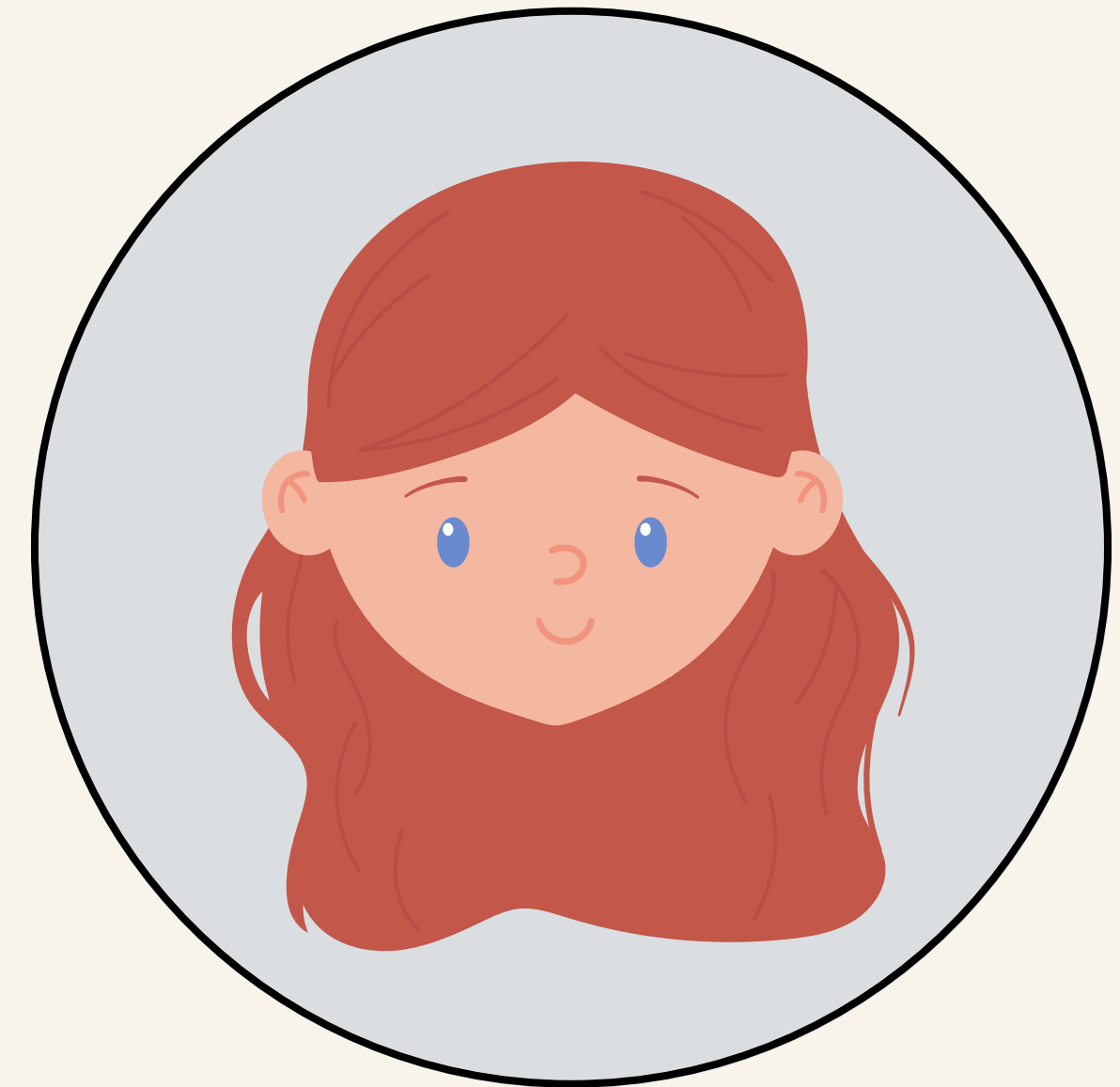
# Who Am I?

## Position:

- EFNEP Nutrition Educator at CCE Ulster
- Healthy Communities Team Member

## Background:

- Master's in Social Work from University of Albany, MACRO concentration
- From a small town farm store to CCE Warren to Capital Roots
- Bachelor of Arts in Sociology from Skidmore College



**Mary Brimmer**

# What is EFNEP?



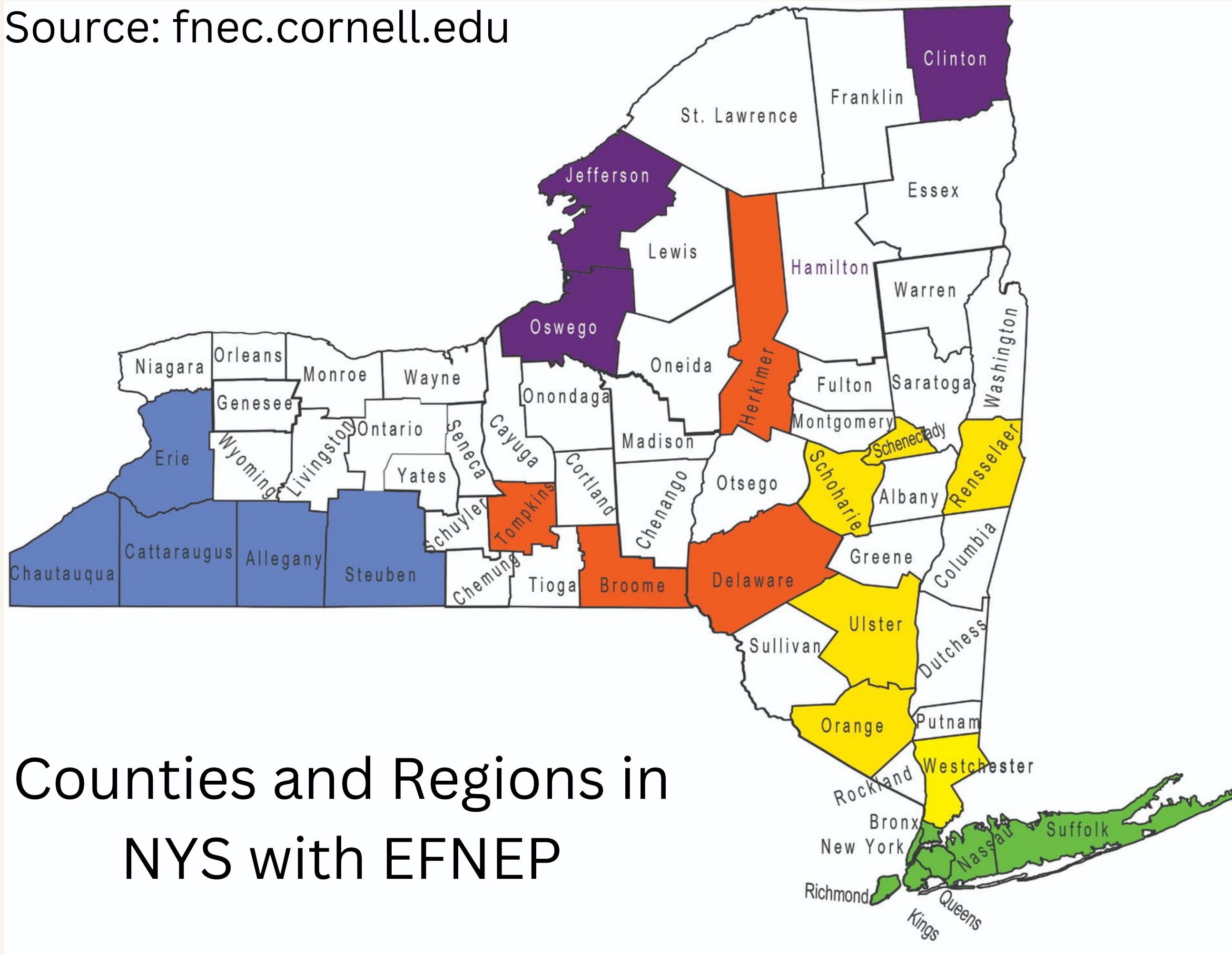
## Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program

- Nutrition Education Program for resource-limited families
- Offered through workshop series, 6-10 weeks long.

Typically meets an hour per week

- Federally-Funded, in states across the U.S.
- In NY, based in Cornell extensions

Source: [fnec.cornell.edu](http://fnec.cornell.edu)



## Counties and Regions in NYS with EFNEP

# WHO DOES EFNEP REACH?

**SNAP/WIC-eligible households**

## **Adults**

Raising a child under 18 and responsible for food decisions

## **Young Adults**

18-25 years old, financially independent and preparing food for themselves

## **Youth Groups**

3rd-12th grade

In districts who participate in free or reduced school lunch at 50% rate or more



# and How?

## Modality:

- Online through Zoom
- In-Person
- One-on-One
- Groups

1 hour+ per week



## Outreach/Promotion:

- Tabling
- Partnerships
- Word of Mouth
- Social Media



# What is Taught?

## Adults/Young Adults

Meal Planning, Budgeting, MyPlate Food Groups, Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2020, Reducing Sugar, Salt and Fat intake, Food Safety and Storage, Food Preparation, No-Cost Physical Activity, Resources, Goal Setting

## Youth

MyPlate Food Groups, Nutrition Facts Labels, Food Safety, Food Preparation, No-Cost Physical Activity, Reducing Sugar, Salt and Fat intake, Goal Setting, Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2020

# How its Taught

## **Adult Curriculum**

Eating Smart, Being Active

FNEC

Breastfeeding

Healthy Cents

## **Youth Curriculum**

Choose Health: Food, Fun and Fitness

Teen Cuisine

Cooking Up Fun!

## **The Four A's:**

**Anchor**

**Add**

**Apply**

**Away**

# General Structure

## **Adult/Young Adult- as an individual and as a parent**

- Entry Paperwork-prior to/start of lessons
- Assessing and Sharing their Experience/Perspective
- Checking in on Goals
- Adding to their Knowledge
- Hands-on Learning
- Sharing of Experience
- Food Activity- thoughts/feelings
- Goal Setting
- Connection to Resources
- Exit Paperwork- last lesson or afterwards

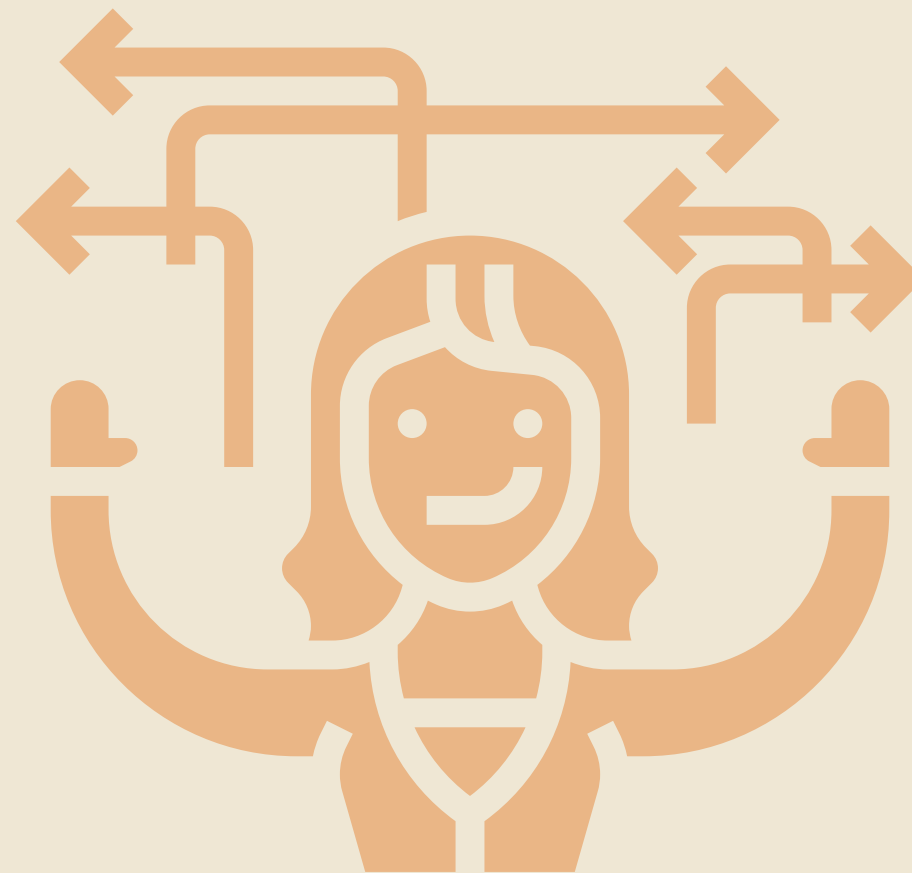
## **Child/Youth**

- Entry Survey-Beginning of Lessons
- Assessing their Experience/Perspective
- Checking in on Goals
- Adding to their Knowledge
- Hands-on Learning
- Sharing of Experience
- Food Activity- thoughts/feelings
- Goal Setting
- Resources for their Families
- Exit Survey- End of Lessons

# What I've Found

## Strengths

Community Resources  
Skills  
Knowledge  
Culture  
Lived Experience  
Social Support



## Challenges

Time  
Childcare  
Access  
Language  
Transportation  
Stigma  
Confusion  
Mistrust

# Varying Perspectives & Mental Models

**Individual Will**

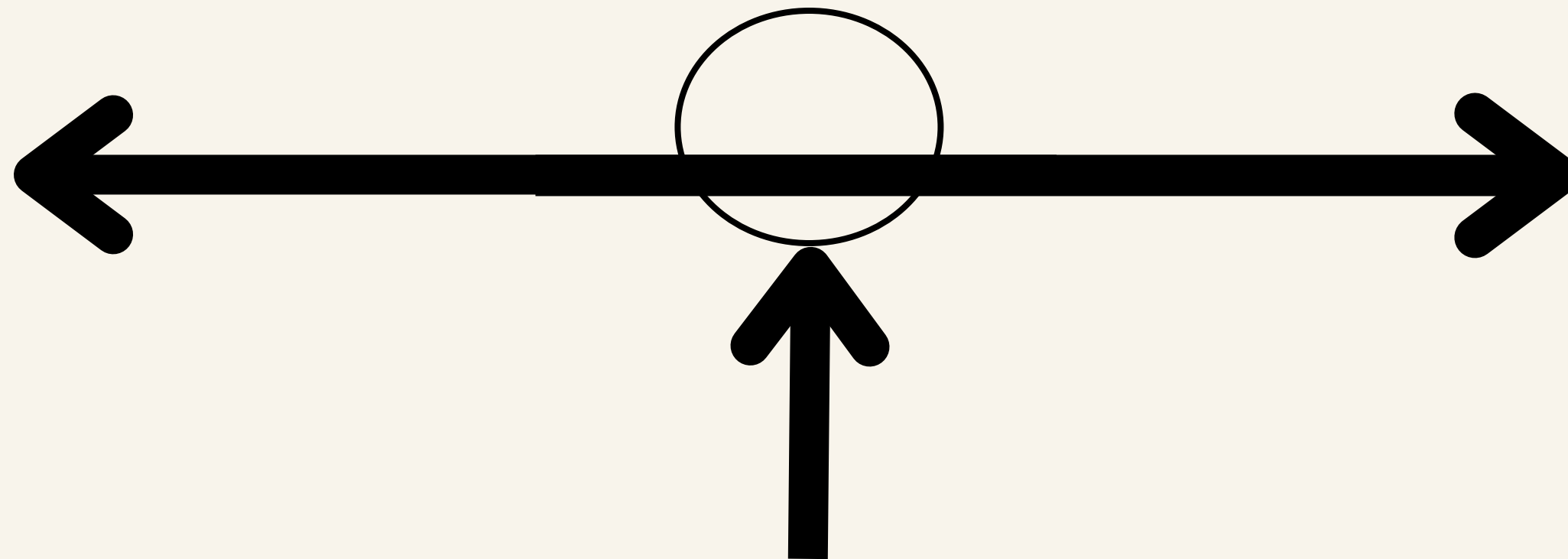
**System Failure**



# Varying Perspectives & Mental Models

**Individual Will**

**System Failure**



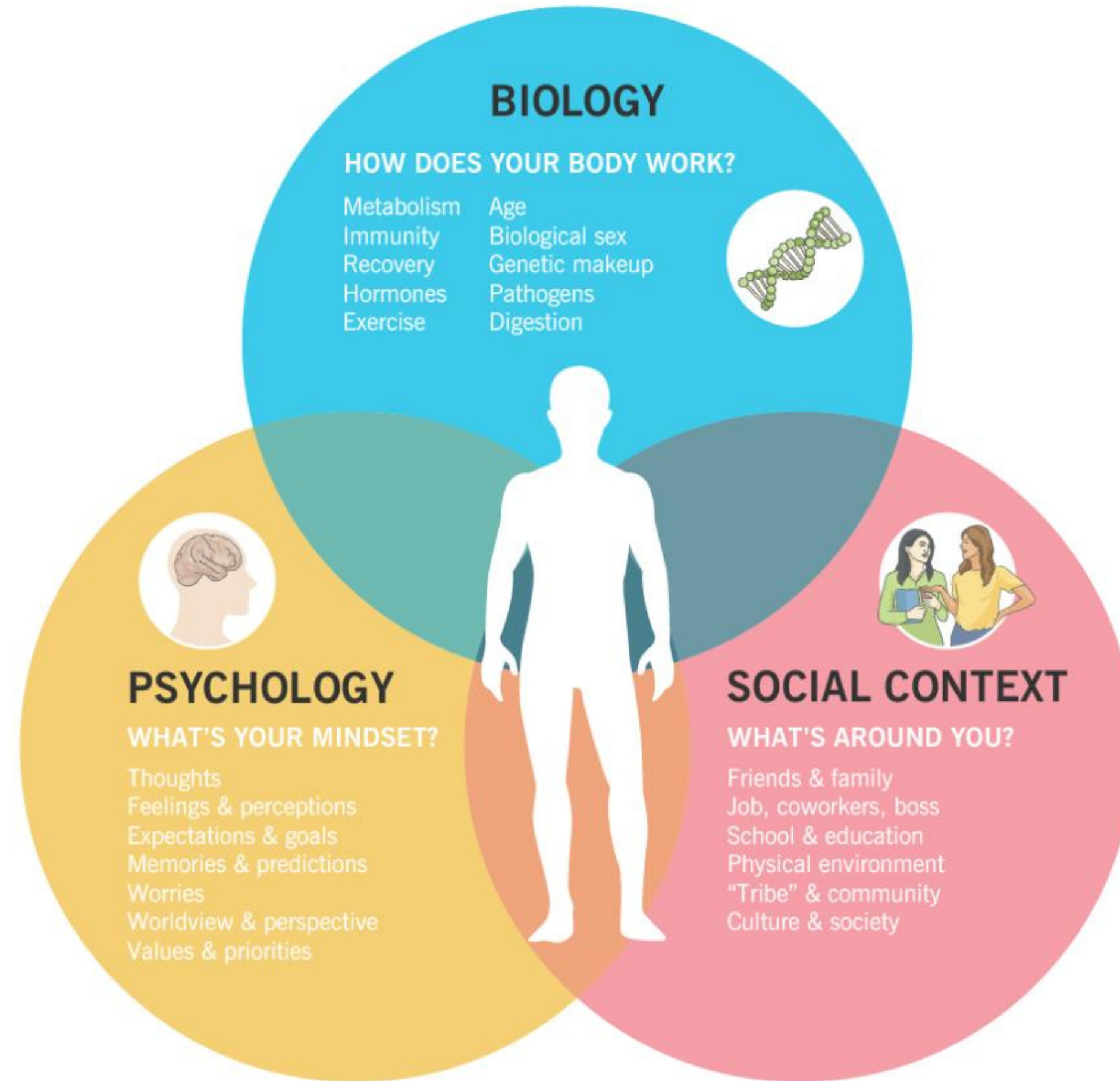
Agency/Empowerment

# AN APPROACH TO NUTRITION EDUCATION

- Meet each person and family where they are
- Give space for conversation, sharing, spontaneity and growth
- Normalize and Empathize
- Strategic Self-Disclosure/Transparency
- Increase Opportunities for Decision Making
- Use a person-in-environment perspective and systems thinking



# Individual Factors

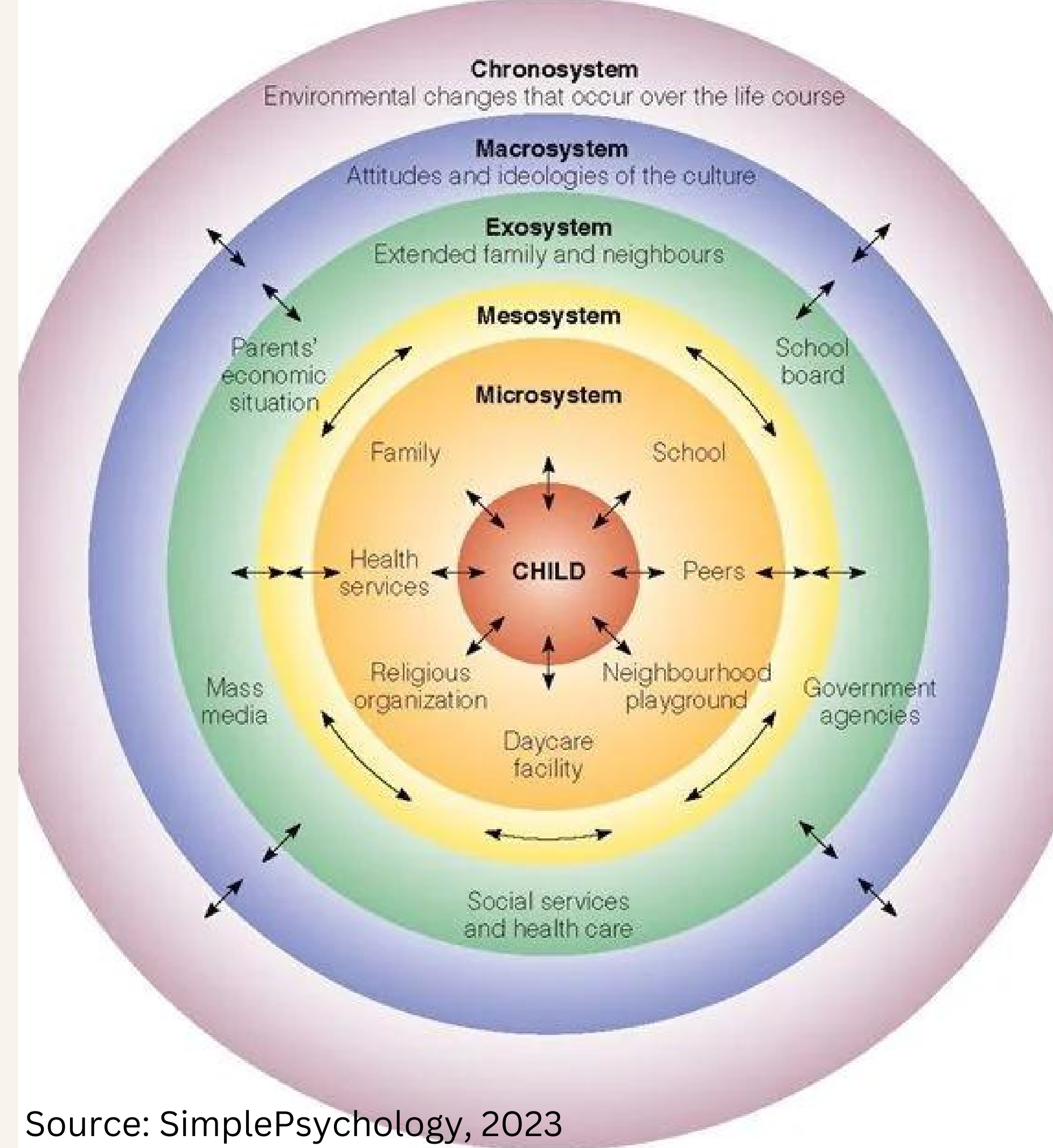


# A Systems Perspective

## Ecological Systems Theory:

Developed by Urie Bronfenbrenner (1977) as a theory of child development

A child interacts and is raised within various systems that influence one another and influence their growth



Source: SimplePsychology, 2023

# HABITS OF A SYSTEMS THINKER

Thinking Tools Studio ([waterscenterst.org](https://waterscenterst.org))



# References

Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979). *The Ecology of Human Development*. Harvard University Press.

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