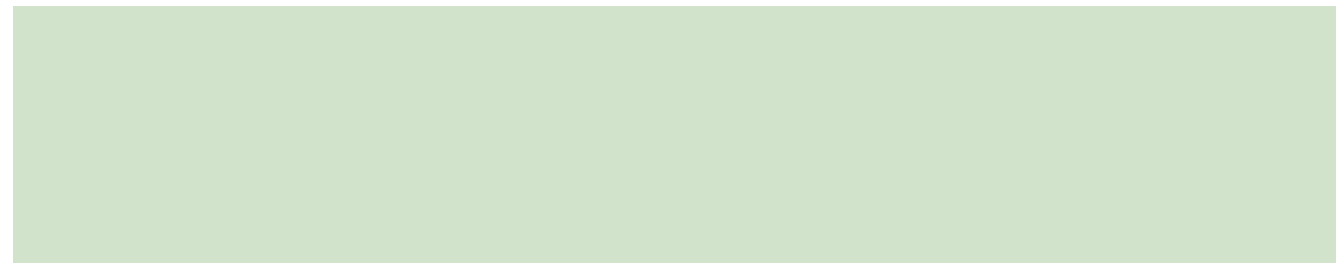


PARENT WORKBOOK ACTIVITY 1: The MindUP™ Brain

As a parent, understanding the links between the brain and behavior can be enlightening. We can see our children's behavior more objectively when we are able to put it into a biological context. An understanding of your child's developing brain can help to lower your parental frustration and increase the effectiveness of your responses. We don't all have to be neuroscientists; however, learning a few key facts about the brain can optimize our ability to help our children navigate childhood and become successful adults. In the MindUP™ curriculum, children learn about four main parts of the brain: the Amygdala, the Pre-frontal Cortex, the Hippocampus, and the Reticular Activating System. Children of all ages love learning interesting facts about their brain. It is powerful for kids to begin learning about their brain because it allows them to actively seek the optimal state for learning and being.

How To Explain The MindUP™ Brain

MindUP™ helps children understand how their brain works in an age-appropriate way. Practice describing either the hand model or the animal analogy with your neighbor. Additionally, using the analogy examples below, create your own analogy for the functions of the different parts of the MindUP™ brain:



MindUP™ Brain Part:

Amygdala
PFC
Hippocampus
RAS



Animal Analogy:

Guard Dog
Wise Old Owl
Hippo
Whale



School Analogy:

Fire Alarm
Teacher
Library
School Secretary



Football Analogy:

Offensive Lineman
Quarterback
Offensive Coach
Center

Parent Workbook Activity 1 : MindUP™ For Parents

| Scenarios | Keeping the Brain in Mind | A MindUP™ Parent Response |
|---|--|---|
| A four year old is on the floor at the grocery store screaming | This child may be hijacked by his emotional brain (amygdala) and not able to reason in the moment (using his PFC). | Say something like "I can hear and see that you're really upset right now, your guard dog is on alert. Let's take a break. Let's go outside and find a quiet place so we can calm the guard dog down." |
| An eight year old child is so anxious she often can't remember seemingly simple details | These two things could be related. When the emotional brain (amygdala) is in overdrive we don't store information well (hippocampus). | Say something like "I've noticed that sometimes when you feel really worried your hippocampus isn't working as well, and you forget some things. I think we need to try to calm your guard dog down so your hippocampus can do its job and help you to remember to bring your lunch to school." |
| A teenager can't sleep the night before a speech she has to give in English class | The teen may be hijacked by her emotional brain (amygdala) and may need help calming down fears and insecurities to better be able to access her reasoning mind (PFC) and positive memories. | Listen to and empathize with her fears and feelings. Help to remind her that her guard dog is on alert, and see what she wants to do to calm it down. Perhaps you can practice mindfully breathing together in bed. What would the wise owl say? |

MindUP™ Family Activity Ideas:

Ages 4-6: Conquering the Amygdala Hijack- Feeling Factory

- Help young children identify what they are feeling and how to describe it. Very often, behavior difficulties (amygdala hijacks) are a result of a young child not having the words to describe what they are feeling and being overwhelmed.
- Practice by acting out faces and guessing each other's feelings so that when the situation is charged with emotion, identifying feelings seems more familiar.
- Move beyond happy, sad and mad. Try frustrated, embarrassed, overwhelmed, jealous, cranky, silly, loving, excited, surprised, and joyful.

Ages 7-10: Conquering the Amygdala Hijack- Settle Your Glitter

- Take a small jar with a screw on lid and fill it almost to the top with water. Add 1 tablespoon of glitter glue. Add another tablespoon or two of fine glitter. Screw the lid on tight and shake!
- Talk with your child about how the jar is like your brain. Notice how hard it is to see clearly when the glitter is spinning. Compare it to when her amygdala is in charge and it's hard to think clearly and make good decisions. When the glitter has settled, compare it to what it's like when her amygdala is calm and she can access her pre-frontal cortex to make good decisions.

Ages 11-14: Conquering the Amygdala Hijack

- Have your teenager get familiar with the things they can do to counter the flood of emotion that is so common during this developmental period. Talk about it when he is feeling calm and centered in his pre-frontal cortex.

Some ideas that might surface, include:

- Exercise
- Journaling
- Being outside
- Spending time with certain friends or relatives . . .



Parent Workbook Activity 1 :

Further Reading and Resources

Learn More . . .

The brain never loses its potential to develop and make more neural pathways through new experiences.

The key to thriving is to have the distinct parts of your brain working well together in an integrated manner.

How we parent can encourage our kids' brains to seek challenges or to avoid them.

Great brain books for kids
Ages 4-6

Great brain books for kids
Ages 7-10

Great brain book for teens
Ages 11-14

Good Books . . .

Smart Parenting, Smarter Kids
By David Walsh, Ph.D.

The Whole-Brain Child: 12 Revolutionary Strategies to Nurture Your Child's Developing Mind
By Dan Siegel, M.D.

Mindset: The New Psychology of Success
By Carol S. Dweck, Ph.D.

A Walk in the Rain with a Brain
By Edward M. Hallowell, MD

Think, Think, Think
By Pamela Nettleton and Becky Shipe

Your Fantastic Elastic Brain
By JoAnn Deak, Ph.D.

How Does Your Brain Work?
By Don Curry

The Teen Brain Book: Who and What Are You?
By Dale Carlson