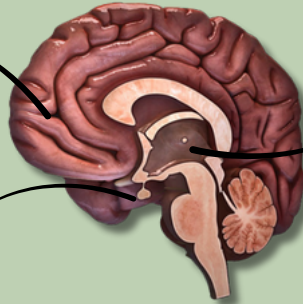


THE AMAZING BRAIN

CORTEX

THALAMUS

AMYGDALA



THALAMUS

External stimuli are passed from the thalamus to the amygdala. The brain decides whether to send data from external stimuli to the limbic region or the cortex, depending on past experiences, emotions and sensory information.

AMYGDALA

In situations that are physically and emotionally intense, the amygdala is activated and shuts down the prefrontal cortex. This means your emotions take over and your logical thinking functions secondary to your emotional reactions.

CORTEX

When stress levels are low to moderate, the prefrontal cortex calms the amygdala down by sending it messages of pro and con reactions.

SURVIVAL STATE

Developmental need: Safety

We reach this state when our basic human needs are not met, such as physical (food, shelter, clothing, etc.) and emotional needs (feeling safe, love, accepted). So fight, flight or freeze response kicks in.



EMOTIONAL STATE

Developmental need: Connection

Housed in the limbic system. Need to feel loved and connected to function optimally. Validation within relationships is important.



EXECUTIVE STATE

Developmental need: Problem-solving in social settings

In the executive state, we feel safe and connected and ready to problem solve, learn, and make decisions. We can remain calm and access our self-regulatory skills, such as impulse control.



THE 3 R'S

TO HELP YOUR CHILD'S DYSREGULATED BRAIN

1

REGULATE

Help your child to regulate their fight/flight/freeze response. Offer physical touch and verbal confirmation of being safe, and loved. Stay with your child, or as close as you can be. Breathing is important to advance to the emotional state. Rocking your young child will create rhythm that will calm the nervous system. Check into your own regulation state. Remember you can be calm, although you still feel angry. Children mirror adult emotions more than words. Your calm presence teaches more than your lecture. Kids often "catch" your mood, not just your message. Don't lecture, just be a safe sounding board. Consequences don't work if your child's brain is in survival mode.

2

RELATE

Connect before you correct. We must relate and connect with the child through an attuned relationship. When your child is upset, and you respond with empathy and compassion, they feel seen, they learn every feeling is valid, they're never alone, and their world truly matters. We don't have to agree with why they are feeling it, just acknowledge that they are feeling it. When you acknowledge your child's feelings, you are giving them an outlet for that emotion through you. This will help strengthening those connections in their immature brain and develop a stronger prefrontal cortex. Facing the same direction when regulating with your teen will help the amygdala to not see you as a threat.

3

REASON

When your child feels calm, support them to reflect, learn, remember, articulate and become self-assured. Talk about boundaries and the natural and logical consequences for the behaviour. Remember, if you have to think about a consequence, it is not natural. Choose your battles wisely. Be open to your teen's perspective. You don't have to agree to it. Share your own challenges age-appropriate challenges with your toddler, teen and tween.