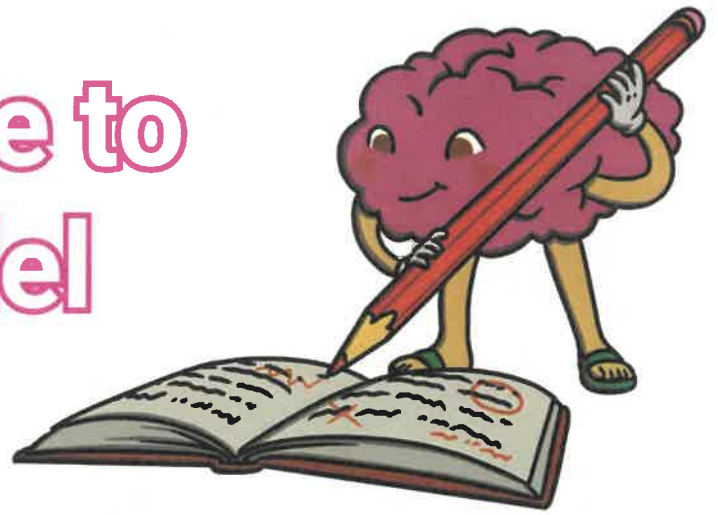


A Parent Guide to the Hand Model of the Brain



In 2010, Dr. Dan Siegel described the 'Hand Model of the Brain'. This is a simple way to visualise the brain and how it responds to stress and emotions. Within this guide, we will explain the hand model along with some practical tips to help you support your child in areas such as managing stress, mindfulness, and controlling tantrums. Understanding how your child's brain works can help you support their emotional and mental development.

The following diagram shows how you can use your hand to represent the brain:

Fist with Fingers Over Thumb: Calm Brain (Thinking and Feeling Working Together)



- The **fingers curled** over your thumb represent the brain when it's **calm and controlled**.
- The **thumb inside** represents the emotional brain which controls **emotions and reactions**.
- The **fingers on top** represent the thinking brain which helps to make decisions and think logically.

Lifted Fingers (Open Fist): Flipped Lid (Feeling Brain in Control)

When a child is upset or stressed, their fingers (thinking brain) will lift and the thumb (emotional brain) will take over. This can be referred to as 'flipping your lid'.

Here is a diagram to show how this may relate to your child's emotions:

Where is your brain?



Thinking brain
Upstairs child's brain
Ready to learn



Caution area



Feeling brain downstairs
'Flipping your lid'

How can I use the hand model with my child?

The hand model can be useful to help explain the 'thinking' and 'feeling' parts of the brain to your child.

Explain the model.

Show your child the illustrations of the hand model and explain how it works. You could encourage them to copy the hand gestures. Use simple terms like 'thinking part' and 'feeling part' to explain.



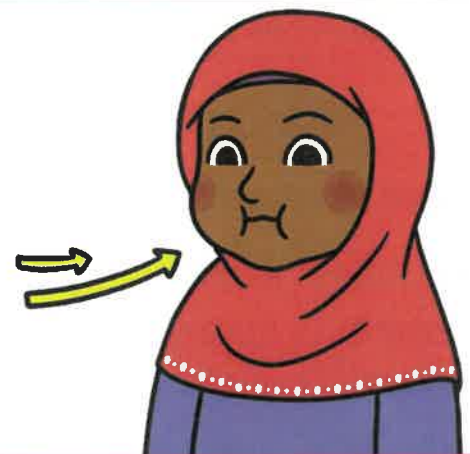
Identify feelings.

When your child is feeling upset or stressed, encourage them to think about the hand model and identify how they are feeling. You could ask them to show you the hand model and identify if their 'thinking brain' is in control or if they've 'flipped their lid'.



Practise mindfulness techniques.

Teach your child techniques to help calm themselves down and be mindful, such as deep breathing, counting to ten, or refocusing their attention. This can help to bring the 'thinking brain' back over the 'feeling brain'.



Tips for Managing Stress and Tantrums

Stay calm.

Stress is contagious and your child will pick up on your feelings. When your child is having a tantrum, stay calm. Your calmness helps their brain feel safe allowing it to begin calming down.



Acknowledge emotions.

It is important to let your child know that it is normal and OK to feel upset. You can help to reassure them with phrases such as, "I see you're very upset right now. Let's practise some mindfulness together."



Create a safe space.

Create a space where your child can go to calm down - this could be a room or a den - anywhere which is quiet and calming. You can fill it with comforting items like soft toys or books.



Stick to a routine and be consistent.

Routines help children to feel calm and secure. Ensure that you stick to consistent schedules such as set times for going to bed, meal times and playtime to help their brain feel safe and reduce stress.



Mindfulness Activities

Try mindfulness activities such as **solving puzzles**, **activity booklets** or **colouring**.

Breathing Exercises

Teach your child to take **slow, deep breaths**. These **Calming Bedtime Movement Cards** will also help your child to relax before bedtime.

Mindful Listening

Sit quietly and listen to the sounds around you. Identify different sounds like birds chirping, cars passing, or leaves rustling. **Meditation** is also a great way to practise mindfulness listening.

Other Calming Techniques

- Count to ten.



- Hug a toy.



- Play a game.



We hope you find the information on our website and resources useful. As far as possible, the contents of this resource are reflective of current professional research. However, please be aware that every child is different and information can quickly become out of date. The information given here is intended for general guidance purposes only and may not apply to your specific situation.

We hope you find the information on our website and resources useful. This resource is provided for informational and educational purposes only. It is intended to offer general information and should never be taken as professional advice on mental health. As information on mental health is complex and is a developing area, we do not warrant that the information provided is correct. You should not rely on the material included within this resource and we do not accept any responsibility if you or your children do. It is up to you to contact a suitably qualified health professional if you are concerned about your mental health or the mental health of your children.

We hope you find the information on our website and resources useful. This resource is provided for informational and educational purposes only. It is intended to offer general information and should never be taken as medical advice. As medical information is situation-specific and can change, we do not warrant that the information provided is correct. You and your children should not rely on the material included within this resource and we do not accept any responsibility if you or your children do. It is up to you to contact a suitably qualified health professional if you are concerned about your health or the health of your children.