

# CALM & CONNECTED

## Educator Workbook



**FocusedKids**  
BRAIN EMPOWERMENT



# How to use this WORKBOOK

## TAKE NOTES



Within each section we encourage you to reflect & take notes as you learn about FocusedKids.

## LEARN MORE

**R3**

**Look for me!**

Back pages are noted within modules in **PURPLE** for further reading and additional resources.

## REFER BACK



Use this workbook as a helpful guide and reference as you implement FocusedKids in your classroom.

## SELF-ASSESS



As you progress through the modules, look out for opportunities to assess your learning:



I have a strong understanding and can teach this to students and colleagues.



I am understanding the concepts well and I am prepared to implement this in my classroom.



I am still learning and have some questions about how to put these concepts into practice.



I am new to this concept or I need additional support from FocusedKids.

## Clinical Meets Practical

# KATHY'S STORY

*FocusedKids was created by Kathy Hegberg, a family and child therapist. Initially designed for preschool-age children, FocusedKids recognizes that the brain is exceptionally receptive to learning in early-childhood.*



Kathy Hegberg  
Founder  
M.A., LPC

As a clinical child and family therapist, Kathy witnessed the profound impact of teaching children about their brains. She realized that when children were taught about their brains, they felt less shame about their actions and gained a sense of hope and empowerment in better understanding themselves and their actions.

Teaching kids about their brains and how they work (a.k.a. brain empowerment) became the catalyst for their individual change and healing. Building on this realization, in 2013 Kathy founded FocusedKids and transitioned her brain empowerment work into local schools in the Roaring Fork Valley. Now, over a decade later, FocusedKids has positively influenced the lives of over 5000 students and more than 600 educators.

### Additional Thanks To



Amanda Petersen  
Executive Director  
M.A., LPC, NCC



Suzanne Vitullo  
FocusedKids Trainer  
M.A.



Amanda Selsky  
Material Development  
M.A.



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# Foundations

# MODULE 1

**What is FocusedKids**  
**Why FocusedKids**  
**Brain-Based SEL**  
**Safe Relationships**  
**A Daily Practice**  
**Tying it All Together**

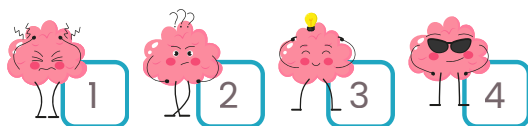
## The FocusedKids Method

In module one, you will learn about the foundational concepts of FocusedKids that will become an integral part of your classroom every day. Let's dive into this science-based approach to managing your classroom.

## Self-Assessment



Before beginning this module, read through and assess your understanding of the learning targets:



MODULE NOTES

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## Learning Targets

☐

I can explain what FocusedKids is to my students, their parents, and other educators.

☐

I understand the foundational concepts that underpin the FocusedKids Method.

☐

I appreciate how FocusedKids will benefit my students and me.

# What is FOCUSEDKIDS

*A brain empowerment program designed for both in the classroom and at home.*

## Our Approach

FocusedKids educates children, parents, and teachers about the developing brain and teaches brain-based social emotional skills.

Students will learn about the three main parts of their brain and practice activities that help them calm their brains and bodies so that they can do their best learning.

## Trauma Informed

*According to Dr. Christine Runyan, **trauma-informed** practices include:*

**Physical Safety**

**Psychological Safety**

**Predictability**

**Control – a sense of choice**

**Belonging and Connection**

**Rest and Recovery**



**Social Emotional**



**Brain Education**



**Self-Regulation**



**Co-Regulation**



**Mindfulness**



**Engaging Tools**

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# Why FOCUSEDKIDS

*Providing teachers with a framework for a calm and connected classroom.*

## Our Why

Today's classroom and school environments present significant challenges that lead to high levels of burnout among educators. At the same time, students struggle in school due to developmental, environmental, and social challenges.

FocusedKids provides a straightforward and effective framework for establishing a calm and connected classroom. It equips teachers with tools and language that promote calm, focus, trust, cooperation, and engagement among students.

## Reflect: Your WHY

Why is a calm and connected classroom important to you?

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## Empowering Teachers



Providing educators with essential tools and strategies to feel confident and impactful.

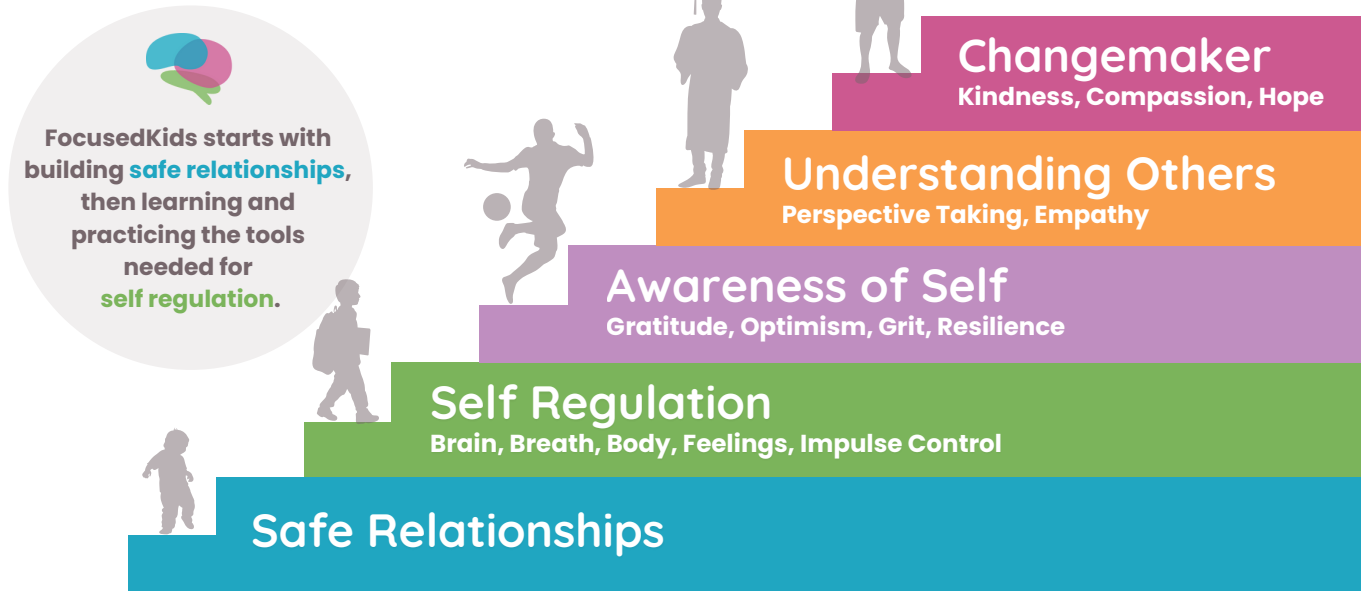


Helping educators learn how to take care of themselves in ways that feel authentic and approachable.

"FocusedKids has given my classroom additional strategies for a calm atmosphere. Students can recognize their emotions and pick a strategy to calm down. Students also offer strategies and empathy to classmates that may be going through a difficult time. As a teacher, I also feel less stressed having a variety of options and strategies to offer my students!"

**- 2nd Grade Teacher**

# Brain-based SOCIAL EMOTIONAL LEARNING



Based on Momentous Institute Model of Social Emotional Health

## The First Two Steps

1

Our approach begins by building **safe relationships** between teachers and students. Students need to feel safe and secure before they can manage their emotions, control their actions, and maintain focus and attention.

2

Once students feel safe and they have learned to integrate calming skills through **self regulation**, they can progress towards the next steps, building their capacity for gratitude, empathy, compassion, and more.

## + BRAIN Education

While helping students develop social emotional skills, FocusedKids also teaches students about the brain structures and processes that are directly connected to their SEL learnings.

Explaining the cognitive foundations that lead to social and emotional wellbeing empowers students to more directly comprehend and influence their own brain structures and processes, making challenging behaviors and emotions more understandable and approachable.

## Step 1:\*

# SAFE RELATIONSHIPS

*By creating a classroom that is trusting and safe, you can help your students develop social-emotional health.*

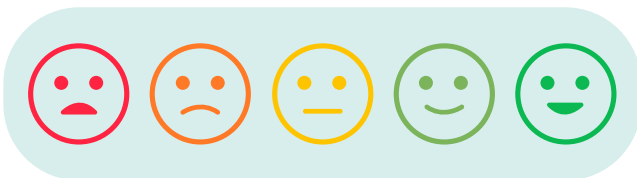
### Security, Acceptance, Belonging

When individuals feel safe and supported in their relationships, they are more likely to experience positive emotions, have a stronger sense of self-worth, and develop healthy coping mechanisms.

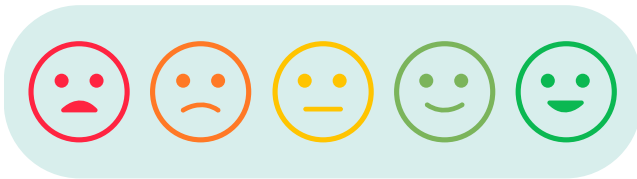
If you are taking care of yourself and getting out of the **red zone**, your brain is less likely to react impulsively to stress. This further builds trust with your students in stressful moments.

### Reflect

1) How is your current self-care practice?



2) How confident are you in getting out of the red zone while teaching?



**Remember to be gentle with yourself!**  
**We will practice self-care in Module 3.**

\*STEP 2 - Self-Regulation will be covered in **Module 3**

### Building Relationships

#### NAMES MATTER



Addressing a child by their name helps to establish a positive connection. **TIP:** Ask how they want you to pronounce their name!

#### CONNECT > CORRECT



Find out what matters to your students and engage with them around that interest. Build from the inside out—regulation, relationship, then academics.

#### DAILY CHECK-INS



Short moments of connection allow you to discover what is happening in each student's life. Start with how students are feeling and thinking in the moment.

EMPATHY STEMS

#### ADDITIONAL IDEAS?

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# A daily PRACTICE

*A daily practice helps wire your brain to support your well-being, leading to increased patience and more thoughtful responses when faced with challenging situations, especially in the classroom.*

## Routines & Consistency

Regular practice enables you to remain calm even in stressful circumstances, which is crucial when teaching students to self-regulate. Teachers with a **daily practice** have reported feeling more equipped to manage their emotions and be present for their students.

Routines reinforce what is familiar and safe. Circle up at the **same time**, at the **same spot**, with the **same self-regulation tools**. Choose a time everyday that the whole class takes a brain break together. Try out: Morning Meeting, after lunch or Specials, before you switch subjects from reading to math.

## Daily Mindfulness

Mindfulness is when we bring our attention to the here-and-now without labeling what's happening as good, bad, or anything else. It has been scientifically proven to aid stress reduction, increase self-awareness, improve resilience, and enhance focus and concentration.

FocusedKids uses mindful exercises every day to help teachers and students practice slowing down and focusing on one thing at a time. These practices wire the brain for better self-regulation and more calm.



### "NEURONS THAT FIRE TOGETHER, WIRE TOGETHER."

When two neurons are activated simultaneously multiple times, their connection becomes stronger, wiring them together to form a neural pathway.



### Our Classroom Brain Break Schedule



MONDAY	THURSDAY
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

TUESDAY	FRIDAY
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

WEDNESDAY
<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>

Take a break!



BRAIN BREAK POSTER



**Suggestions:** Chime, Breathing Ball, Glitter Jar, etc. Scan the QR code for more brain break ideas! **Pro Tip:** Be proactive by scheduling 3-4 brain breaks throughout the day rather than waiting until dysregulation occurs.

# Module 1

# TYING IT ALL TOGETHER

*In module 1, you learned all about the key foundational concepts of FocusedKids.*

## Reflect

1) What is FocusedKids in your own words?

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2) What are the two key steps in the Social Emotional Model for FocusedKids?

1

2

3) What is a takeaway from module 1 that you want to prioritize in your classroom?

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## Self-Assess



After going through this module, take a moment to re-assess your understanding of the learning targets.



## Learning Targets



I can explain what FocusedKids is to my students, their parents, and other educators.



I understand the foundational concepts that underpin the FocusedKids Method.



I appreciate how FocusedKids will benefit my students and me.

→ **Up Next:**  
**Module 2 – The Brain**



# The Brain

## MODULE 2

**Why Teach Brain Basics**  
**3 Key Players**  
**Using Puppets**  
**Brain Language**  
**Hand Model of the Brain**  
**Tying it All Together**

### Brain Education

This brain-based social-emotional learning is rooted in neuroscience.

Neuroscience for kids you may be asking? In this module, we will dive deeper into how we teach simple brain science to students.

### Self-Assessment



Before beginning this module, read through and assess your understanding of the learning targets:



MODULE NOTES

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### Learning Targets

☐

I can explain the three key parts of the brain that influence a child's mind.

☐

I can use puppets and hand models to teach and practice brain basics.

☐

I can teach students a shared language to communicate about the brain.

☐

I can integrate brain knowledge into my daily routines in the classroom.

# Why teach BRAIN BASICS

*Having a shared language to talk about what is going inside of our brains makes the classroom more manageable.*

## Benefits for Students

### Self-Awareness



Learning about the brain's structures and functions helps children make the connection between their brains and their thoughts, feelings, and behaviors.

### Self-Regulation



This knowledge helps students better manage their thoughts, feelings, and behaviors, supporting self-regulation.

### Social Skills



When a child learns about their own brain, they also gain insight into the brains of their peers, building empathy, understanding, and cooperation.

### Focus & Attention



Once equipped with brain knowledge, students can use these skills to focus their attention on problem solving, critical thinking, and creativity.

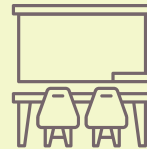
## Benefits for Teachers

### Relational Skills



Understanding a child's brain helps you to bond with your students so they feel safe and understood.

### Management



Brain basics help you teach students how to focus their attention and manage themselves, their emotions, and their behaviors.

### Instructional



Brain knowledge provides your class with a shared-language, allowing you to adapt your instruction to the needs of your students in that moment.

## NOTES

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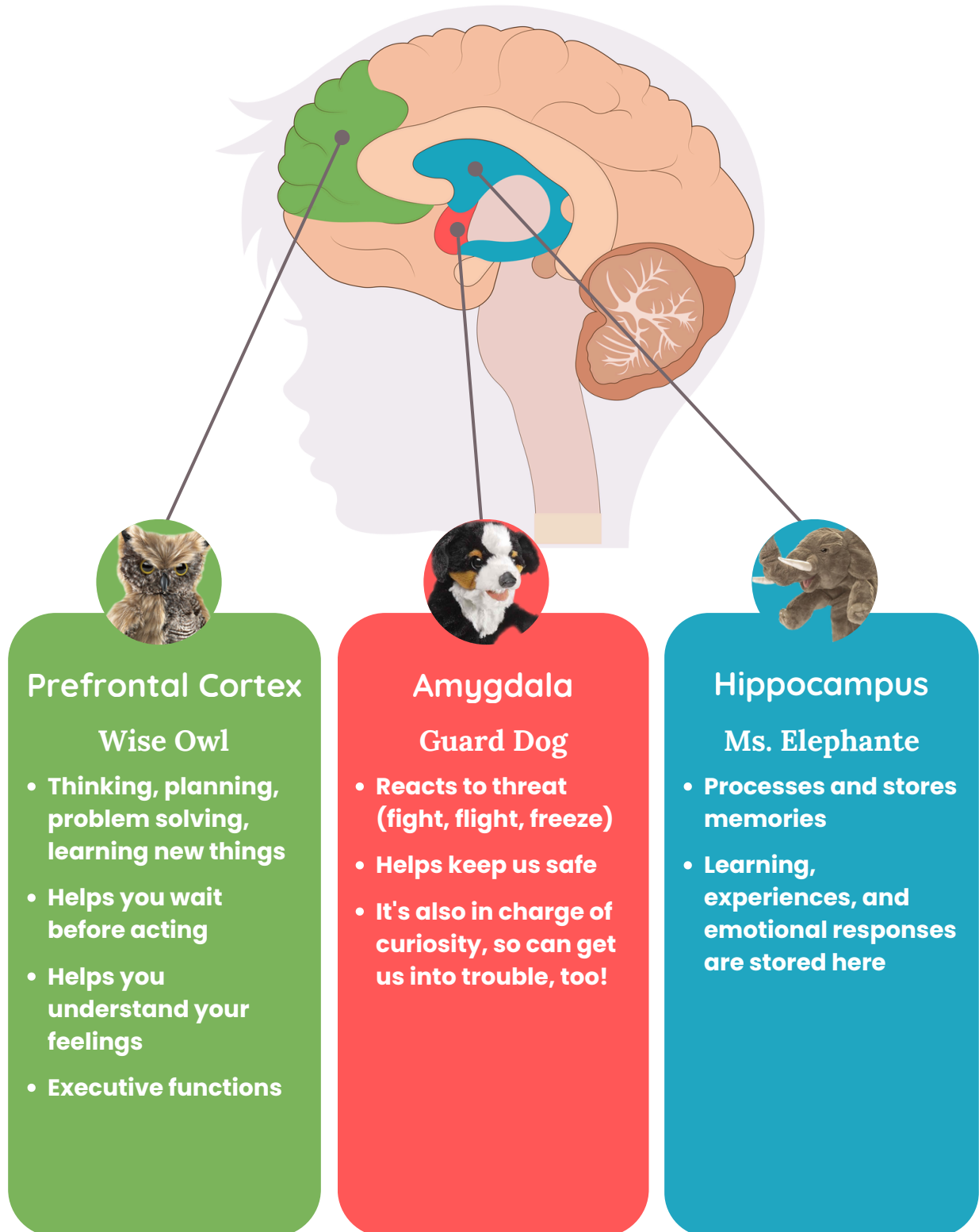
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## 3 Key Players IN THE BRAIN



# Using PUPPETS

*FocusedKids uses puppets to represent the three key parts of the brain.*

## Brain Science for Kids

To bring the three key players in the brain to life, FocusedKids uses puppets. There is one puppet for each of the key players: the **prefrontal cortex**, the **hippocampus**, and the **amygdala**. The puppets make this fun and easy to understand.

## Why Puppets?



The use of puppets is rooted in a research-based play therapy technique.



Puppets offer a buffer between the child and adult, which is especially beneficial for children who have experienced trauma.



Puppets act as a safe and non-threatening alternative for children to feel more comfortable expressing their thoughts, feelings, and ideas.



Puppets allow for role-play, conversations via puppet, and the exploration of different ideas.



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# Incorporating BRAIN LANGUAGE

*How to teach your students about their brain.*



## Amygdala Guard Dog

- Guard Dog is loud, active, and explains that its job is to keep you safe and that it is in charge of curiosity.
- It is fully grown when you are born and is often in charge until you are 4 or 5 years old.
- The flight, fight, or freeze part of your brain.

### Guard Dog Brain Language

"Looks like our Guard Dogs are on high alert in the classroom. How can we help calm them down?"

"If you're feeling stressed, it means your Guard Dog (amygdala) is on alert. What can you do to calm that part of your brain before we tackle this test?"

**How might you talk about the amygdala to support emotional awareness in your classroom?**



## Prefrontal Cortex Wise Owl

- Wise Owl helps you wait before acting.
- Wise Owl helps you understand your feelings.
- It is all about thinking, planning, problem solving, learning new things.
- It supports executive functioning.
- You need it to learn new concepts, solve problems, and make decisions.

### Wise Owl Brain Language

"I'm keeping an eye out for students using their prefrontal cortex to get ready for learning."

"I see \_\_\_\_\_ using their prefrontal cortex, getting prepared for math by cleaning up and managing their time well..."

Place your hand on your forehead where the prefrontal cortex is and say, "I'm watching out for students using their Wise Owl." Call students out by name.

**How can you encourage kids to use their Prefrontal Cortex?**



# Incorporating BRAIN LANGUAGE

*How to teach your students about their brain.*



## Hippocampus Ms. Elephante

- Ms. Elephante is active and silly.
- She has trouble straightening her trunk where she takes in her memories – the kids can help her with this.

### Ms. Elephante Brain Language:

"This is my friend Ms. Elephante. She is the memory box of your brain."

"Who can use their Hippocampus, or Ms. Elephante, to remember what we learned in math yesterday?"

"Well done, using your Hippocampus to remember your homework!"

How can you help students connect with their hippocampus during a lesson?



## CALL IT OUT

Students love being recognized for using their **Prefrontal Cortex**. Connecting different brain parts to student behaviors is an excellent tool for classroom management and reinforcing their understanding of the brain.

# Dan Siegel's HAND MODEL OF THE BRAIN

*We can demonstrate emotional regulation using the "Hand Model."*

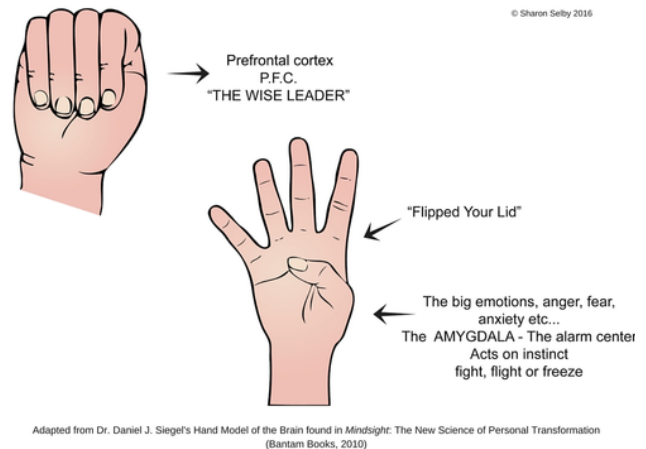
## The "Handy Brain"

The hand model of the brain helps students understand how different parts of the brain work together, using hand positions to symbolize the functions and interactions. It simplifies a complex concept, supports kinesthetic learning, and provides a shared tool that you can practice together as a class.

## In the Classroom

As students get older, the hand model serves as a great alternative to puppets. Once students understand the hand model, holding up the "flipped your lid" signal can be a non-verbal way to get students' attention. Parents love learning about the hand brain model, too!

## Learn More from Dan Siegel:



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## Module 2

# TYING IT ALL TOGETHER

*In module 2, you learned how to bring brain knowledge and language into your classroom.*

### Make it a Habit

Set aside dedicated pockets of time in your days for deliberate practice. Practice makes perfect when it comes to understanding the three key players in the brain, what they do, and how to work with them.

### Reflect

1) When during the school day could you integrate the brain? BE SPECIFIC!

☐  
☐  
☐

2) How could you celebrate students who use brain language and apply these practices in your classroom?

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### Self-Assess



After going through this module, take a moment to re-assess your understanding of the learning targets.



### Learning Targets

- ☐ I can explain the three key parts of the brain that influence a child's mind.
- ☐ I can use puppets and hand models to teach and practice brain basics.
- ☐ I can teach students a shared language to communicate about the brain.
- ☐ I can integrate brain knowledge into my daily routines in the classroom.

➔ **Up Next:**  
**Module 3 – Regulation**

# Regulation

## MODULE 3

**Why Modeling Matters**  
**Self-Regulation**  
**The Power of the Breath**  
**Co-Regulation**  
**Self-Care in Action**  
**Tying it All Together**

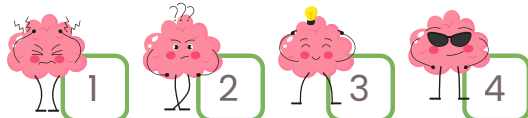
### Practicing Regulation

Now that you know more about the brain, it's time to use that knowledge to practice and model regulation with students. Both self-regulation and co-regulation serve as powerful tools in the classroom.

### Self-Assessment



Before beginning this module, read through and assess your understanding of the learning targets:



MODULE NOTES

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### Learning Targets

☐

I can understand and practice self-regulation and co-regulation.

☐

I can integrate wellness practices into my personal daily routine.

☐

I can begin my own daily practice.

# Why MODELING MATTERS

*Students learn just as much from what you model as from what you teach—your behavior shapes theirs.*

## Students Look to You

One of your biggest jobs as a teacher is modeling the behaviors and attitudes you want to see your students acting out in the world. When it comes to creating a classroom full of calm and connection, your students are going to look to you to show them what to do. It's critical that you learn how to skillfully model the skills of self-regulation.

## Personal Growth

To fuel that personal growth so you can wholeheartedly model mindful behaviors, we recommend creating a daily practice for yourself using the FocusedKids exercises you use in the classroom.

## Secret TIP!



The FocusedKids exercises work just as well for adults as they do for children. Having your own practice allows you to teach from an authentic and relatable place. Cultivating your very own practice also helps you remain calm during stressful situations.

## Reflect

List as many practices that you can think of that help you regulate:



**It doesn't have to take long! Try starting with 3–5 minutes.**

# Understanding SELF-REGULATION

*Self-regulation is the ability to name feelings, understand emotions, control impulses, and calm down when you are experiencing intense emotions.*

## Self-Regulation

### EMOTIONAL SELF-REGULATION



When we can recognize, understand, and manage our emotions in a healthy way, we are utilizing emotional self-regulation. With the right practices, children can gradually learn how to calm themselves down.

ARC OF THE TANTRUM

### BEHAVIORAL SELF-REGULATION



The ability to prevent impulsive actions and express intentional ones. Examples include remembering and following rules, not hitting or biting, and sharing in play.

### COGNITIVE SELF-REGULATION



The most complex and last to develop. It begins to appear in four-year-olds as they develop their ability to plan (e.g., what they are going to do) and utilize appropriate responses (e.g., listening when a story is read).

FINDING MY CALM

## Requirements

- Safe Relationships
- Senses as Anchors
- Brain Basics
- Modeling
- Impulse Control
- Managing Feelings

## Why Self-Regulation

### Without Self-Regulation

- It can put strain on the parent / teacher-child relationship.
- Children can develop aggression, withdrawal, or anxiety that can interfere with the child's social competence.
- It can impact a child's experience making or keeping friends.

### With Self-Regulation

- Children have better attention and problem solving capabilities necessary for cognitive functioning.
- Children can be more resilient when facing distress at home, in school, or elsewhere.

## Name it to Tame it



Simply naming an emotion can help calm the brain and body's response to it.



# The power of THE BREATH

*Deep breathing is one of the best ways to lower stress in the body. This is because when you breathe deeply, it sends a message to your brain to calm down and relax. The brain then sends this message to your body.*

## Breathing Benefits



The amygdala decreases in volume (lower reactivity) as the prefrontal cortex grows stronger and more active.



The connection between the amygdala and the rest of the brain gets weaker, while the connections between areas associated with attention and concentration get stronger.



Brain function improves for concentration, memory, problem-solving, and energy levels.



When we practice slow, mindful breathing, it helps balance a brain chemical called noradrenaline. This creates a calm, focused state that helps the brain grow new connections, making it easier to learn and improve at things we practice.



By giving your brain regular, short breathing breaks, the cortisol level in your brain and body come down...reducing stress. Ultimately, you may become more resilient to stress, that is, bounce back faster.

## Reflect

Try a **breathing exercise**. How do you feel afterwards?

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## NOTES

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# Understanding CO-REGULATION

*Co-regulation is when a caregiver helps to soothe a child's emotional distress and guide them back to regulation. It is the most effective way to help a child calm down and is the foundation for self-regulation.*

## Regulatory Support

A young child's prefrontal cortex (a.k.a. Wise Owl and the part of the brain responsible for impulse control, decision-making, and emotional regulation) is not fully developed. This makes it extremely challenging for children to regulate their emotions and behaviors independently and explains why they need adults to model self-regulation for them.

Because most children lack a sturdy prefrontal cortex, a regulated adult can "lend" a dysregulated child their regulated prefrontal cortex by connecting with the child and modeling regulation, helping the child breathe and gather themselves, resetting their **nervous system**.

## Classroom Strategies

Educators can hone their co-regulatory supports for students by reflecting on their student interactions and planning intentionally.






Co-Regulating Moves	This Might Look Like:
 Set the scene	Using lighting as a cue – dimmer to bring the energy down, brighter to bring the energy up
 Match volume and tone	When a situation is escalating, keeping a quiet or moderate volume with a serious, calm, steady tone
 Check your physical presence	Getting on students' eye level to balance power
 Use reflecting language	Naming the emotions students express as a way to show you are listening to or seeing them
 Prompt strategies and choices	Remind students of available supports or strategies, when they might not be at their best

Chart courtesy of Center for Whole-Child Education

## Reflect

What is the difference between **CONTROL** and **CO-REGULATION**?

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## In action:

# SELF-CARE

*As you've been learning, how we show up matters, too! This is just one example of how to reset your nervous system.*

### Step 1

In the space below, write one stressor and name the feeling you had as a result of it. Understanding what pushes your buttons helps you better prepare for future stressors.

#### STRESSOR

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#### FEELING

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### Step 2

Allow yourself to be curious about what is happening with body and mind as a result of the stressor. Notice the sensations. Which part(s) of your body feel stressed?

#### IN MY BODY, I FEEL

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### Step 3

Stressors make us react in ways we do not want, so we can be hard on ourselves after. When this happens, it is important use self-compassion. Write some compassionate advice you would give to a close friend in a similar situation.

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*\*Adapted from A Week of Wellness: 7 Daily Challenges to Lower Stress and Reclaim Joy. 2021 Momentous*

## Step 4

Let's consider a few different types of rest! For the last part of this activity, select which type of rest you need the most and how you plan to put it into practice.

TYPE OF REST	✓	ACTIVITY
<b>Physical</b> - Relieve your body of physical stress like muscle tension, lack of sleep, or headaches		
<b>Spiritual</b> - Tap into your spiritual beliefs and practices, if this resonates		
<b>Mental</b> - Quiet your anxiousness & refocus on the most important things		
<b>Social</b> - Identify which relationships are nourishing your energy & limit your interaction with toxic and draining people		
<b>Sensory</b> - Take a moment to be still & silent without outside interference		
<b>Emotional</b> - Express your true feelings & cut out the "people-pleasing" mentality		
<b>Creative</b> - Let the beauty of your surroundings inspire you and motivate you		

### Remember



What fires together, wires together! Consistent practice is the key.

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## Module 3

# TYING IT ALL TOGETHER

*In module 3, you learned all about the importance of regulation and how to support this in your classroom with a daily practice.*

### It Starts With YOU

A regulated adult is necessary in order for successful co-regulation to take place. With this understanding, make it a priority to take care of yourself throughout the school day so that you can better show up for yourself and your students.

### Reflect

1) How do you want to show up now that you've been trained in FocusedKids?

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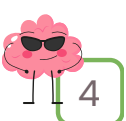
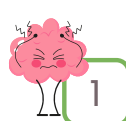
2) What daily practices might support this goal?

<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

### Self-Assess



After going through this module, take a moment to re-assess your understanding of the learning targets.



### Learning Targets

☐

I can understand and practice self-regulation and co-regulation.

☐

I can integrate wellness practices into my personal daily routine.

☐

I can begin my own daily practice.

→ **Up Next:**  
**Module 4 – Key Tools**

# Key Tools

# MODULE 4

**Key Self-Regulation Tools**  
**Creating a Calm Down Space**  
**Designing a Calm Down Space**  
**Mindful Practices**  
**Tying it All Together**

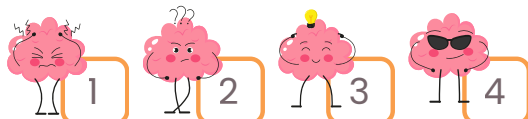
## Bring More Calm

In module four, you will explore the key tools and teaching skills that are an essential part of implementing FocusedKids in your classroom.

## Self-Assessment



Before beginning this module, read through and assess your understanding of the learning targets:



MODULE NOTES



## Learning Targets



I can model how to use self-regulation tools in my classroom.



I can create and implement a calm down space.



I can bring calm to my class when students are dysregulated.

# Key self-regulation TOOLS

*Incorporating different tools and techniques will provide you with a variety of ways for students to self-regulate.*

## Calm-Down Basket



Creating your own basket as a class project will heighten the value and create buy-in from each child. Your calm down basket can include glitter jars, spheres, pinwheels, and more. The goal with the calm-down basket is to have your class use it on their own when they need to calm down. However, children's ability to do this comes after they have practiced it many times together as a class.

## Chime



Listening to the chime while taking deep breaths slows everything down! Using the chime regularly trains the child's brain to take a breath and pay attention when it hears the tone. Children will practice listening to the chime several times a day, mastering the ability to sit quietly for up to three minutes. When the chime rings, instruct students to take a deep breath, listen for the sound of the tone, and raise their hand when they can't hear it anymore.

## Belly Breath



Breathing with an object (hand, stuffy) on the belly allows the child to experience the breath physically in a new way. Also, seeing the object move up and down engages the senses in breathing, creating more awareness of how it feels. Children will learn that using their breath to rock the object calms them down.

## Glitter Jar



We use the glitter jar as a metaphor for what happens in our brains when we are overwhelmed. As the glitter settles, kids see the water clear just like how they can see things more clearly. Focusing on one thing helps the brain settle and gives it a rest before the next task. To make a jar, mix water, glitter glue, and glitter in a jar, ball, or other container. Shake it up and watch the glitter settle.



# Creating a CALM DOWN SPACE

*Calm down spaces create a safe and supportive place for students to re-focus and use self-regulation skills. It creates a container for big feelings.*

## 1. Define the Space



The first step to setting up a calm down corner in your classroom is to clearly define the space by labeling the area. This space is to be used **ONLY** as a calm down space – the primary reason kids are in here is to regulate, reflect and reset. Choose a space that is conducive to being calm.

## 2. Select Calm Down Techniques

- Chime
- Breathing Ball
- Feelings Chart
- Coloring Pages
- Stress Ball
- Glitter Jar
- Stuffed Animal
- Books

Select the calm down **techniques** and **tools** that students will use while in the space.

**Remember**



Model and practice all tools and strategies as a class before putting them in the calm down corner for independent use.

## 3. Establish Guidelines



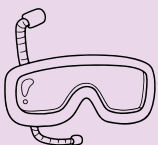
Establish clear guidelines for how long a student is allowed to stay in the area. Consider adding a visual to assess how the student is feeling during their time in the space.

## 4. Incorporate Learning



An effective calm down corner includes some kind of learning moment. Include tools and strategies that help them to become more aware of their emotions and how to respond to them effectively.

## 5. Swim First



Pre-teaching these skills is the make-or-break for an effective calm down corner in the classroom. The best time to teach kids to do this is when things are going well. FocusedKids provides and recommends instruction routinely during circle time, several times a day, while they are in a calm state.

Calm down corners work especially well in **preschool** and **elementary** classrooms

Use **explicit instruction** for successful mastery of self-regulation skills.

# Designing a CALM DOWN SPACE

*Let's get more specific about implementing a calm down space that works for you and your students.*

## Map it Out

What comes to mind when designing your calm down space?



## Brainstorm

What have you seen work well in a calm corner? What do you want to include?

- ☐
- ☐
- ☐
- ☐
- ☐
- ☐

## Tool notes

Take note of what you want to remember about each tool:

TOOL	NOTES
Glitter Jar	Introduce with FocusedKids Glitter Jar lesson, pre-teach how to use, include in basket

## MORE IDEAS



Calm Down Area Label  
Calm Down Basket  
Finding My Calm Chart  
I Feel Coloring Page  
I Feel Chart

Social Story Books  
Posters with Strategies  
Calming Activity Cards  
A Visual Timer  
A Breathing Chart

**Draw It**

What might your calm down space look like? Where will it fit into your classroom?

# Mindful PRACTICES

*Move, color, and breathe to calm the brain.*

## Mindful Movement

A favorite activity for squirmy students is **mindful movement**.

Begin with stretching, add in some breathing, and you and your students will be hooked on this practice. Do it daily as a way to release energy and stress, reset, and integrate new learning into the brain.

TRY THIS

"We are going to practice some mindful movement. This means we are going to move our bodies, but in a way that is slow and in control. The opposite of mindful movement is moving your body with no awareness or really crazy. A great time for non-mindful movement is at recess. In our classroom we can take breaks to move our bodies mindfully in a way that allow us to jump right back in to what we are learning. We call this mindful movement."

## Mindful Coloring

**Mindful coloring** helps our brain focus on one thing at a time while strengthening the prefrontal cortex (Wise Owl) and calming the amygdala (Guard Dog).

Mindful coloring is fun and engaging for all ages. Add the use of gel pens for an extra engaging experience. Using gel pens also helps students slow down.

NOTES

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## Module 4

# TYING IT ALL TOGETHER

*In module 4, you explored some key tools and practices to support you as you create greater calm in your classroom.*

### Supporting Self-Regulation

By modeling these tools, teaching students how and when to use these tools, and practicing these skills with your class, students become better equipped to self-regulate. A variety of options for students further supports student choice and autonomy.

### Reflect

1) Why is it important to pre-teach your students how to use the calm down corner and tools?

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2) When are the best times during your school day to explicitly pre-teach these tools?

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### Self-Assess



After going through this module, take a moment to re-assess your understanding of the learning targets.



1



2



3



4



### Learning Targets



I can model how to use self-regulation tools in my classroom.



I can create and implement a calm down space.



I can bring calm to my class when students are dysregulated.

→ **Up Next:**  
**Additional Resources**



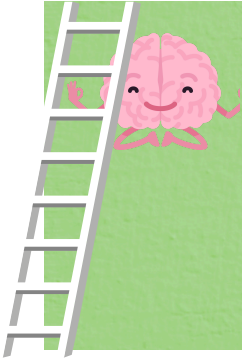
# Additional RESOURCES

- R1    Zones of Regulation**
- R2    Starting with YOU: Using the Zones**
- R3    Trauma Informed Brain Breaks**
- R4    Empathy Stems**
- R5    Brain Break Schedule (English & Spanish)**
- R6    Autonomic Nervous System**
- R7    Arc of the Tantrum**
- R8    Breathing Exercise**
- R9    Mirror Neurons**
- R10   Additional Ways to Create Calm**
- R11   Finding My Calm Worksheet**
- R12   Mindful Practices: Movement**
- R13   Mindful Practices: Coloring**
- R14   Books and Online Resources**

# Zones of REGULATION

*Your brain, nervous system (3 states), and the zones of regulation (integration)*

Green Zone



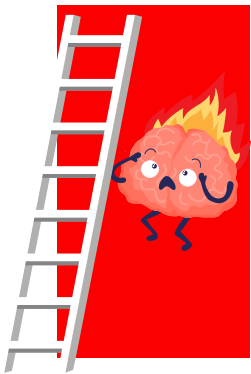
## **Safe and Connected** *Energized and Calm*

Energy coming from the front of your brain- PFC- able to problem solve, be flexible and adaptable, creative, compassionate, in a state of integration.

**What part of your day are you MOST likely to be in your green zone?**

**What strategies/tools help you to move into this zone OR stay in this zone?**

Red Zone



## **Too Much Arousal** *Flight/Fight (Human and Normal!)*

Energy coming from the back of the brain- flight, fight, freeze, blood pressure rises, face hot, heart beat raises, struggle to connect with yourself and others, inflexible, rigid, impatient, worried.

**What part of your day/week are you MOST likely to move into the red zone? (student, class, admin. request, hungry, home...)**

**What strategies help you when you are in this zone? What strategies help you get out of this zone? Calming vs. Movement**

Blue Zone



## **Too Little Arousal** *Collapse and Disconnect*

Energy coming from the back of the brain- disconnected from self and others, dysregulated, shut down, seeking safety through disconnection, unmotivated, numb, freeze, collapse.

**What part of your day/week are you MOST likely to be in your blue zone?**

**What strategies help you to move out of this zone? Energizing vs. Stillness**



# Starting with YOU

## USING THE ZONES

*Our brains are designed and wired to keep us safe, so it makes sense that we pay attention to what's not working in case protective responses are needed. But too much focus on what's not working may impact wellbeing.*

### Practice → Wiring



It is much easier to build new habits when you are in the green zone versus in the red or blue zone.



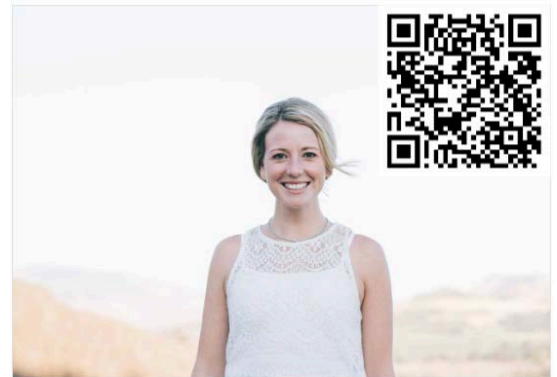
Use the green zone to develop and practice new habits.



Use the red and blue zone to remember what is going to help you move out of this zone when you are ready.



There is no right or wrong. The zones of regulation are part of being human. With more understanding we can choose which zone we want show up in.



#### Guest Speaker: Cara Maiolo on the Zones of Regulation

Meet Cara Maiolo, MA, LPC, RYT. Together we'll explore the zones of regulation. Cara brings with her over 20 years of experience helping people regulate their nervous systems so that they can create more calm for themselves and everyone...

FocusedKids / May 11, 2023

### CO-REGULATION

The assistance provided by a caregiver to soothe a child's emotional distress and guide them back to regulation.

### A DYSREGULATED ADULT

can never regulate a dysregulated child.

### SELF-REGULATION

The ability to understand emotions, control impulses, and calm down when you are experiencing emotions or stress.

# Trauma Informed **BRAIN BREAKS**

*Build safety in your classroom by checking in with a student.*



- What will work best for you today?
- Empower students with agency to make their own decisions about what feels comfortable to them.
- Account for students' individual life experiences.

I invite you  
to take a  
comfortable  
seat for our  
brain break.

As we start, I  
invite you to  
either take a  
deep breath  
or find peace  
in your mind  
or body.

Now that we  
have ended,  
does anyone  
want to share  
how they feel?

# Empathy

## SOUNDS LIKE

**I can see  
that you  
are...**

**It seems  
like...**

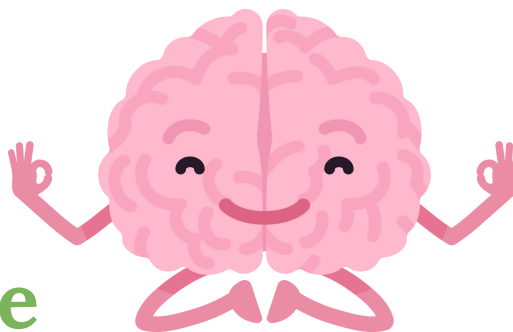
**Tell me  
more  
about...**

**It must  
have been  
really  
difficult...**

**I am here  
to keep  
you safe.**

**Adults are  
here to  
keep you  
safe.**

# Our Classroom Brain Break Schedule



## MONDAY



## THURSDAY



## TUESDAY



## FRIDAY



## WEDNESDAY

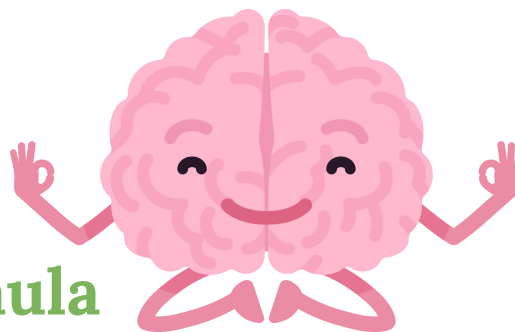


Take a break!



**Suggestions:** Chime, Breathing Ball, Glitter Jar, etc. Scan the QR code for more brain break ideas! **Pro Tip:** Be proactive by scheduling 3-4 brain breaks throughout the day rather than waiting until dysregulation occurs.

## Nuestro horario de descanso cerebral en el aula



### LUNES



### JUEVES



### MARTES



### VIERNES



### MIÉRCOLES



¡Hacer una pausa!



**Sugerencias:** la campanada, la esfera para respirar, el frasco de brillantina, etc.  
¡Escanee el código QR para obtener más ideas para descansar el cerebro! **Consejo profesional:** sea proactivo y programe 3 o 4 descansos cerebrales a lo largo del día en lugar de esperar hasta que este desregulado.

# The Autonomic NERVOUS SYSTEM

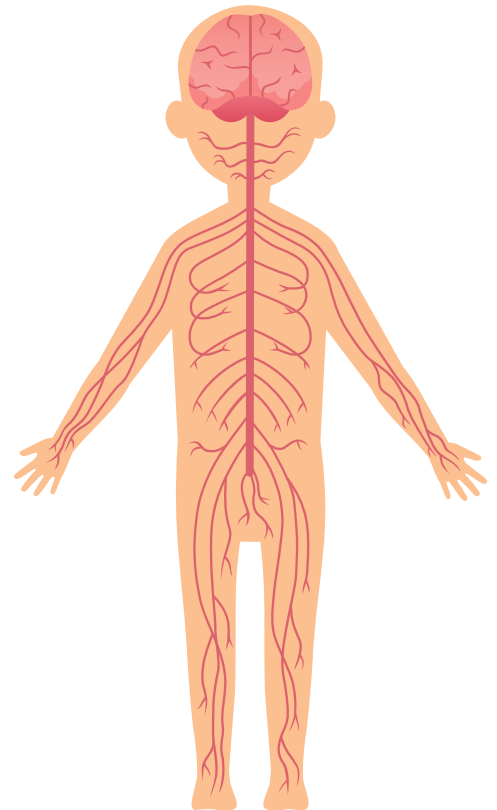
*In our brains, the Autonomic Nervous System (ANS) regulates emotions by utilizing two sub-divisions:*

## Sympathetic

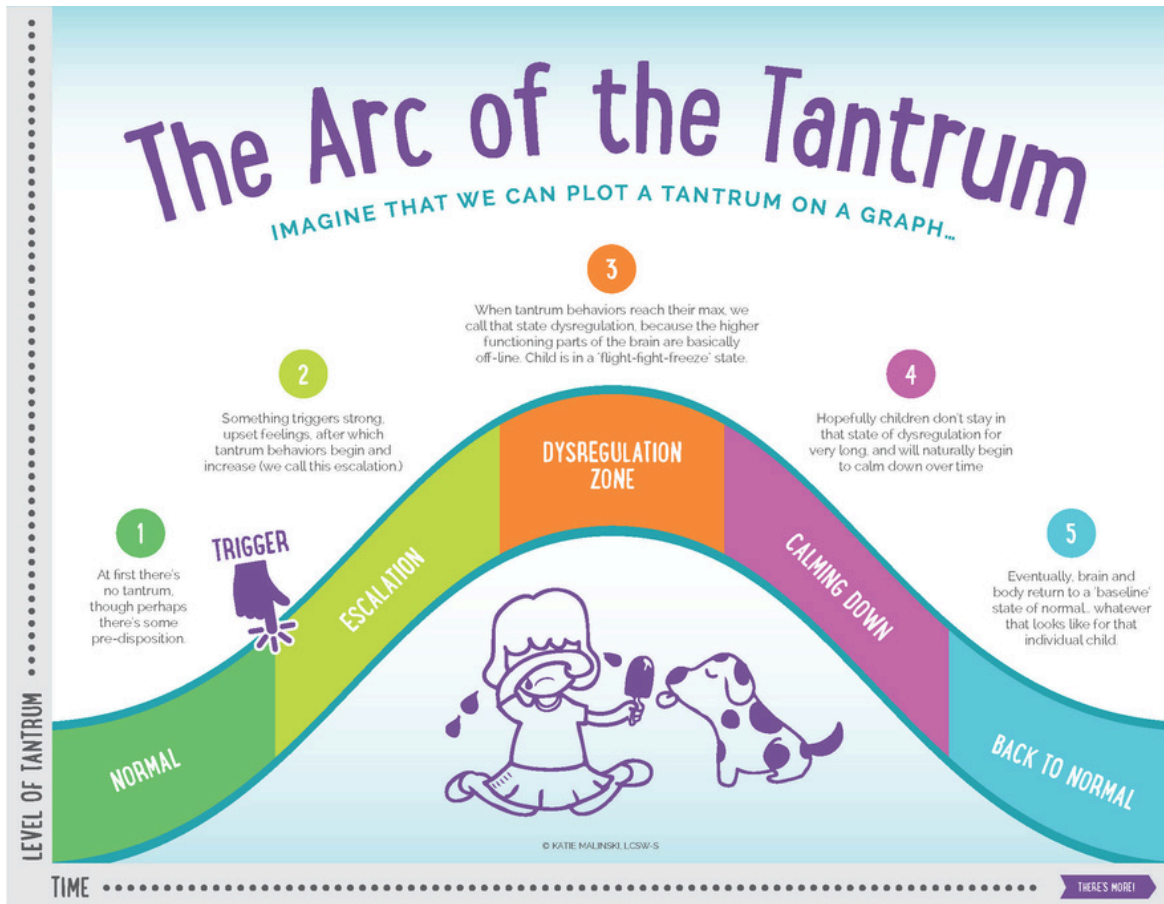
The **sympathetic** division is an emergency or quick response mobilizing system. Its primary job is to activate the body's fight-or-flight response. You can think of this as the gas pedal in a car. When activated, it allows our bodies to engage and move quickly by speeding up heart rate, shutting down our digestion, and making more glucose available in the blood for energy.

## Parasympathetic

The **parasympathetic** division is a slowly activated calming or dampening system. It produces the rest-and-digest response for the body to relax and recover from daily living. This is like the brake in a car. When activated, it creates a calming effect in our bodies by slowing down heart rate, increasing digestion, and conserving energy. Activation of the parasympathetic nervous system can also counter the arousal effect created by the sympathetic nervous system.







BEFORE TRIGGER	ESCALATION	DYSREGULATION ZONE	CALMING DOWN	BACK TO NORMAL
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Everything is OK, or</li> <li>Predisposed for trouble, i.e. dinnertime, rough day, over-tired.</li> </ul> <p><b>PREVENTION TECHNIQUES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Classic stuff like sleep, exercise, nutrition, consistent routines, and clear &amp; consistent expectations</li> <li>"Front-loading"</li> <li>Overall help the child to be their best self.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Whining</li> <li>Arguing</li> <li>Yelling</li> <li>Physical tension in body builds</li> </ul> <p><b>DE-ESCALATION TECHNIQUES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Keep yourself calm.</li> <li>Send de-escalation signals: take deep, slow, quiet breaths. Check your physical posture—your body should be relaxed, and not too tall or too close to your child. Slow your physical movements. Reduce or stop talking.</li> <li>Put on your "Face of Compassion."</li> <li>Let your child be "seen and felt."</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Being "flooded"—brain isn't working</li> <li>Fight, flight or freeze</li> <li>Screaming</li> <li>Hitting</li> <li>Throwing</li> </ul> <p><b>SELF-MANAGEMENT &amp; HEALTHY BOUNDARIES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assure safety for living things.</li> <li>Keep or regain your own calm. If you aren't calm, take your own time out—staying present when you are upset only makes things worse.</li> <li>Be available to help your child regain their regulation, or manage their environment to help with this.</li> <li>Practice healthy emotional boundaries. Avoid: talking, lecturing, rationalizing, fixing, advising, debating, correcting, threatening. Verbal interventions unlikely to work.</li> <li>Some kids need more space from you during this time, some kids need you to be physically present, but generally without much talking or involvement.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Quieter voices</li> <li>Slower movements</li> <li>Hiding</li> <li>Physical "slump"</li> </ul> <p><b>WAIT!</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>If your child is de-escalating, LET THEM! Don't intervene and mess it up.</li> <li>Time passing is helpful in de-escalation. Avoid rushing into the circle-back phase.</li> <li>Look for a physical slump or relaxation.</li> <li>"Do you want a hug to help you with your feelings?"</li> <li>Remember, you might need this time, too. Check your own physical state before re-engaging, too.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Looks, acts, and reacts like your normal kid.</li> </ul> <p><b>CIRCLE BACK</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>An hour or a week later, you can circle back to address important things related to the incident.</li> <li>Most important: reconnect the relationship and repair. Apologize for your part.</li> <li>Teach. For example, you can talk about the healthy coping skills YOU use when you have a hard time, that your child might also find helpful.</li> <li>Reparation. Work with your child to identify something that you can do together to 'make right' in some way.</li> <li>Please note, you don't need to do all of these. Every situation doesn't need a lesson and/or reparation, and some kids will have to work hard to build the ability to tolerate more than a few seconds of a circle back conversation.</li> </ul>

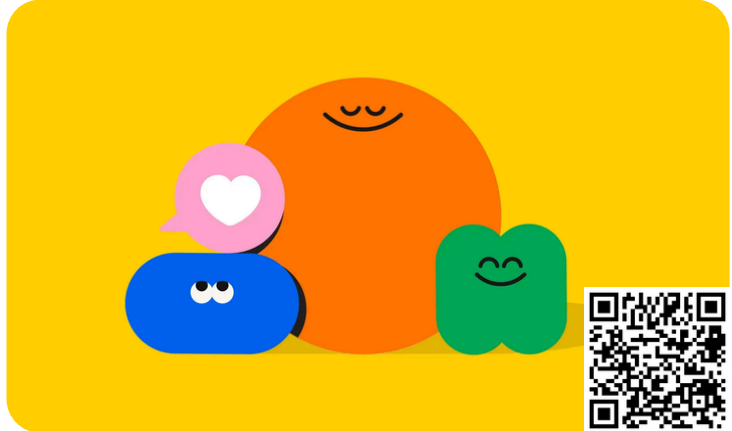
# Breathing EXERCISES

*Practice these breathing exercises to calm down your body.*

## Extended Exhale

1. Sit in a comfortable position, cross-legged, in a chair or lie down.
2. Be aware of your breath — observe its natural rhythm without making an effort to adjust it.
3. Notice the sensations in your body; the rise and fall of your breath, the feeling in your nostrils, and the sound of your breathing.
4. If you're feeling really stressed, you can use a longer exhale to calm your nervous system. Inhale for a count of 3, then exhale for a count of 6.
5. Return to your normal breath and observe any changes in how you feel.

Try out the Extended Exhale with [Headspace](#):



## Balancing Breath

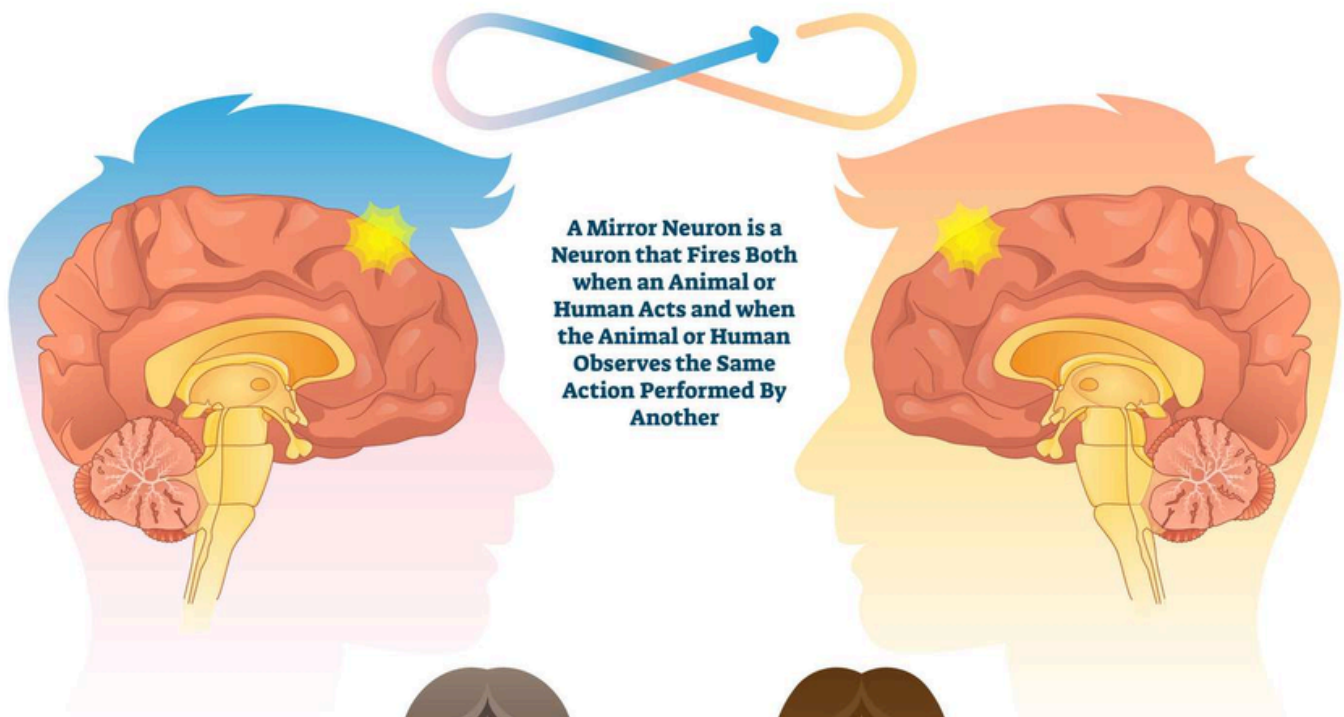
1. Close your eyes or gaze down at the floor.
2. Focus your attention on your breath. Observe its natural state without making any adjustments or trying to change it.
3. Breathe in for four counts and breath out for four counts. Matching the in-breath and the out-breath is called a balancing breath.
4. Return to the space in the room slowly, giving yourself time to reemerge into your day.

Practice Breathing with [FocusedKids](#):





# MIRROR NEURONS



## Additional ways to **CREATE CALM**



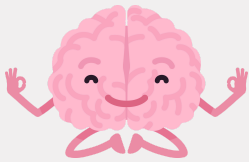
### Curate a Special Spot

Dedicate a small space in your classroom to things that make you feel happy. When feeling stressed and overwhelmed, look at this spot, take three deep breaths, and find some calm within yourself before moving on with your day.



### Create a Cozy Circle

Organize your circle area in a way that feels comfortable and inviting. Keep the focus on your students and find ways to make them feel welcome and free of distractions. Also, have your chime accessible and keep it in a “special” spot.



### Take Brain Breaks

Make a habit of taking short brain breaks during transitions during the day. Set a timer and participate with your class. Deep breathing calms the guard dog (amygdala) and allows you to think clearly and stay calm! **Give your students opportunities to explore... What feels good to one student might not feel good to another.**



### Declutter Your Desk

It is easier said than done, but helps you feel less scattered and calmer about your daily tasks. Get your students involved! Have a helper each day to keep you on track! Students love feeling connected to you and your space.



### Make Time for Mindful Coloring

Set aside a consistent time each week (maybe during CREW, or at the end of the day) to dim the lights, put on calming music, and mindfully color with your students. You and your class will feel calm, focused, and happy!

Name

## Finding My Calm



# Mindful practices

# MOVEMENT

*Mindful movement allows for both energy release and grounding.*

## Mindful Movement

Mindful movement is a way of moving with intention that sends a message to your brain that you are paying attention in an alert way, while you help your nervous system settle.

Mindful movement provides the opportunity to release energy while grounding our body as we slowly move to a calm state. This may include mindful walking, tai chi, or yoga.

Are your students bouncing off the walls? Then they are not releasing energy but are escalating until they finally crash.



## Mini Movement Ideas

- **Mindful Walking** – Ask children to notice how their feet feel inside their shoes or how the surface of the ground feels with each step.
- **Move like an Animal** – Encourage children to move like a penguin or a horse—and notice how the body feels and how the muscles move differently.
- **Find 10 Things** – Move slowly around the classroom and have students find ten things they never noticed before. Write down or share what they observed.
- **Heartbeat Awareness** – Invite your class to notice their heartbeats in their chest. Try it while sitting, walking, and running.

# Mindful practices

# COLORING

*Coloring is a powerful tool to help lower stress along with many other benefits.*

## Coloring Benefits

- Improves motor skills
- Improves focus and hand-eye coordination
- Improves handwriting
- Helps learn boundaries, structure, and spatial awareness
- Helps self-expression
- Teaches color awareness, recognition, and discernment

## Using the Coloring Book

### MINDFUL COLORING AS AN INTENTIONAL SKILL

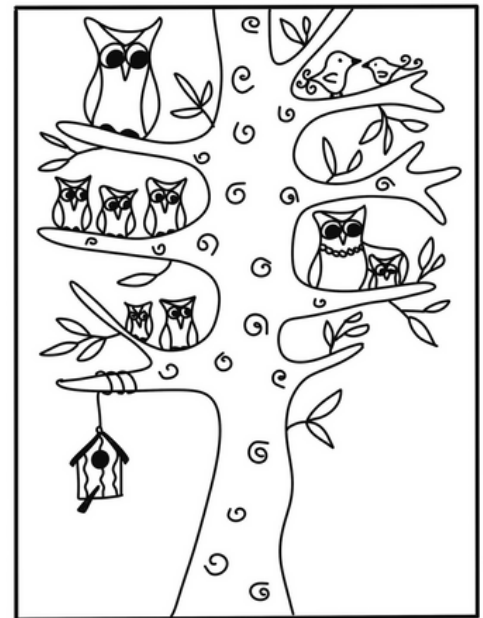
It is more than just coloring. It is about slowing down, taking your time, and being aware of how it feels.

### KEEP THIS TIME SACRED

Turn on soothing music. Encourage students to reflect on how mindful coloring feels in their body and mind. Comment on how the energy in the room has shifted.

### BE AN ACTIVE PARTICIPANT IN THE PROCESS

Model what mindful coloring is by doing it alongside your students in a purposeful way.



Name: \_\_\_\_\_



Download all of the **FREE** coloring pages in the [FocusedKids Library!](#)

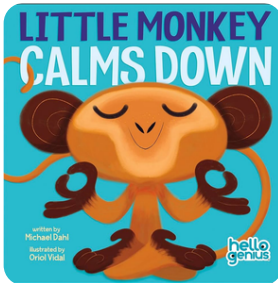


## Resources

# BOOKS & ONLINE

*Interested in learning more? Check out the resources listed below.*

### Recommended Books



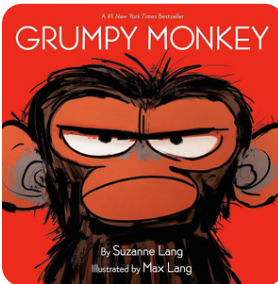
#### Little Monkey Calms Down

by Michael Dahl



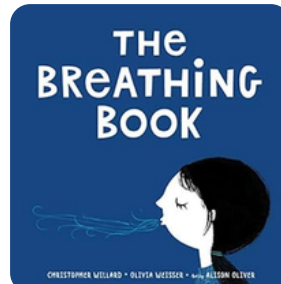
#### Your Fantastic Elastic Brain

by JoAnn Deak



#### Grumpy Monkey Series

by Suzanne Lang



#### The Breathing Book

by Christopher Willard



#### Mindfulness Moments for Kids Series

by Kira Willey



#### Alphabreaths Series

by Christopher Willard



#### FocusedKids Lesson Books

by Kathy Hegberg



## Resources

# BOOKS & ONLINE

*Interested in learning more? Check out the resources listed below.*

### Online Resources

#### mindUP



#### movemindfully



#### Dr. Chris Willard



#### Center on the Developing Child



#### Momentous Institute



#### Greater Good



