

Fact sheet

Connection

- Connection is a biological imperative which means that we can't control our need to connect with others – it is an instinctual drive.
- Our ancestors needed to connect with others to be safe – if they were part of the group they would be safe from predators and be part of the community that is fed, sheltered and loved.
- If people are shunned from a group they feel a sense of shame – those two words and sham or scam have the same etymological roots – (*skem-, from *kem- "to cover")
- If we feel stressed from being shunned or shamed, we get an extra boost of cortisol which is also known as the stress hormone. It is activated by the threat response – also known as the fight/flight system. The role of cortisol is to send energy to the larger limbs to allow a surge of energy to activate fight/flight.
- If we feel we belong to the group, we get a nice hit of the happy hormone – oxytocin, also known as the 'love drug'. Small and repeated boosts of oxytocin, from hearing our name said in positive ways, being welcomed, having soft eye contact, hearing soothing voices, and generally being well regarded help us to stay attached to the group.

How does this look in the classroom?

Create positive connection through:

- Use people's names and encouraging others to – some students who have been impacted by trauma have only heard their name used in a negative way.
- Have deliberate soft eye-contact – feel the smile behind your eyes.
- Welcome students in to the classroom – especially when they are late – make sure they know they are welcome...try to keep the issue of lateness separate.
- If possible build a sense of security in the room – celebrate students work.
- Display posters reflecting the multiple cultures and identities – and celebrate important days. This could include Pride flags, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags), cultural celebrations tied into learning - Lunar New Year, Orthodox Easter and celebrations, Eid Al Fitr, Ramadan...

Further Resources / Reading:

(see bibliography for full details)

- <https://www.etymonline.com/>
- Attachment Based Teaching – Louis Cozolino.
- Distressed or Deliberately Defiant? Dr Judith Howard
- Trauma Informed Education with Dr Kay Ayre - #38 Creating Connections with Challenging Students
- Fine Print Journal, Volume 41, Issue 2. Attachment theory, neuroscience and adult literacy learners. Linno Rhodes.

Between the lines ...

Fact sheet

Coping skills

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Further Resources / Reading:

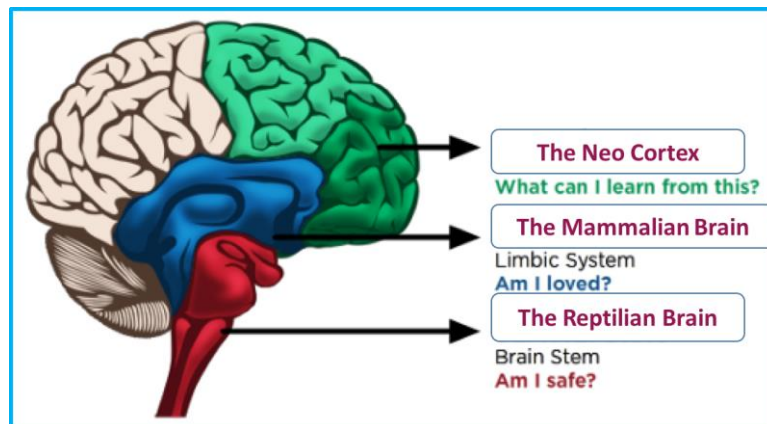
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- <https://www.etymonline.com/>
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Between the lines ...

Fact sheet

The Triune Brain



What is it?

The triune brain was developed by Psychologist Paul Maclean in the 1960s. This model divides the brain into three distinct structures based on how they evolved.

- 1. The Reptilian Brain** – also known as the primitive brain. Has instinctive function.
 - We share this part with reptiles.
 - First to develop in utero and can be traced back to our earliest human ancestors.
 - Made up of the brain stem and cerebellum
 - Responsible for our survival – regulates our breathing and drives other functions like sweating, blinking...anything a baby can do.
 - This is also known as the survival part of the brain because when the limbic system senses a threat, it sends hormones to the brain stem to engage the Fight Flight Freeze (threat) response.
 - We cannot control this response by thinking about it – we have to feel safe to come out of threat response.
 - Asks the question – “AM I SAFE?”
- 2. The Emotional Brain** (aka the limbic system, the mammalian brain)
 - The mammalian brain is the next part to develop. It is also known as the feeling brain or the emotional centre because the limbic system is all about feelings.
 - The Limbic system is made up of the thalamus, amygdala and hippocampus
 - This is where love, jealousy, attachment and social interactions live.
 - This part of the brain is looking for connections with others –and is strongly associated with survival.
 - In early days being part of a group – the village or clan was how we survived – we looked out for each other and if anyone broke the rules they were ostracized and experienced shame.
 - We can see how shame is used to keep us safe – but also used to keep us small because the drive to belong to the group is so strong – its connected to

our survival. If we disappoint the group we are risking being shunned. It is the limbic system that determines whether we are safe or under threat –

- The mammalian brain asks “am I loved”, or “am I connected?”
- The thalamus, amygdala and hippocampus team up to assess interactions and assign an emotional response and memory – creating neural pathways that tell us whether we have encoded a situation as safe or dangerous. See fact sheet on *Neural Pathways*

3. The Neo Cortex

- Also called the executive state because we do all our thinking work here.
- Responsible for our abstract thoughts, our excel spreadsheet organizing, and creativity.
- It is also activated when the other parts of the brain are relaxed and there is a felt sense of safety.
- This part of the brain is more about thinking than feeling.
- The neo cortex can be hijacked by the limbic system when a cue of threat is detected. The ability to apply rational thought is diminished as hormones are sent to the limbic system to activate the threat response.
- Asks the question – What can I learn from this?

How does this look in the classroom?

When students who have experienced trauma show up in our classrooms, their brains are always primed for the threat response to be engaged – the part of the brain that is looking for cues of danger is enlarged and will respond to neutral data as if it were a threat – think about a time when you have been staring off in to space looking ‘through’ someone – who has understood you to be giving them the ‘hairy eyeball’ – “what are you staring at?”

Students need to know that they have safe connections in order to learn – the mammalian brain and reptilian brain need to feel safe enough for learning to happen.

- Provide a mindful minute at the beginning of each session
- Left and right brain activities – those that use creativity and linear reasoning keep the pre-frontal cortex engaged.
- Focusing on process of learning rather than right and wrong
- Avoid big red Xs when marking work
- Give constructive feedback
- Make it okay to make mistakes and model mistakes being okay by voicing self-compassion
- Provide art journals for end of session reflective exercises.

Further Resources / Reading:

(see bibliography for full details)

- <http://www.learningandteachinghub.com/blog/2020/01/08/e11-ideal-learning-conditions-the-triune-brain-linno-rhodes/>
- <https://www.thescienceofpsychotherapy.com/the-triune-brain/>
- Dr Daniel Siegel presenting a Hand Model of the Brain
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gm9CIJ74Oxw>

RESOURCES AND BIBLIOGRAPHY

CARDS

Conversation Cards The Three Seas

<https://biglifejournal.com/collections/journals/products/conversation-cards>

Character Strength Cards Thepositivityinstitute.com.au

Compassion Cards www.pesipublishing.com

BOOKS / JOURNALS

- Brown, B. (2007). *I Thought It was Just Me (But it Isn't): Making the journey from "What will people think?" to "I am enough."* New York, New York: Avery.
- Brown, B. (2012). *Daring Greatly: How the courage to be vulnerable transforms the way we live, love, parent, and lead.* New York, New York: Avery.
- Brown, B. (2016). Brene Brown encourages educators to normalize the discomfort of learning and reframe failure as learning. *About Campus.*
- Buzan, Tony & Barry. *The Mind Map Book* BBC London, 2003
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- Neff, Kirsten. *Self Compassion. The Proven Power of Being Kind to Yourself.* Harper Collins 2011, New York
- Olson, Kirk. *The Invisible Classroom, Relationships, Neuroscience and Mindfulness in School.* Norton. New York, 2014
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- Siegel, Daniel J, MD. *Mindsight, Change Your Brain and Your Life.* Scribe, London 2016
- van der Kolk, B., *The Body Keep the Score. Brain, Mind and Body in the Healing of Trauma.* Penguin 2014
- Rogers Carl R and Peter D. Kramer *On Becoming a Person: A Therapist's View of Psychotherapy*

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- Fine Print Journal, Volume 41, Issue 2. Attachment theory, neuroscience and adult literacy learners. Linno Rhodes.
- <https://valbec.org.au/fine-print/>

<https://www.abc.net.au/everyday/self-care-tips-for-teachers-to-avoid-burnout/9842104>

- Research Today Issue 27 Reading between the lines – adult literacy education and neuroscience Linno Rhodes

https://www.aveutra.org.au/data/Research_today_May_2021.pdf

<https://www.cathymalchiodi.com/resources/expressive-art-therapy-articles-links/>

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/au/blog/arts-and-health/202106/understanding-fight-flight-freeze-and-the-feign-response>

WEB

Youtube / Ted talks

- Brene Brown – The power of vulnerability
https://www.ted.com/talks/brene_brown_the_power_of_vulnerability
https://www.ted.com/talks/brene_brown_listening_to_shame
- Carol Dweck Growth Mindset
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KUWn_TJTrnU
https://www.ted.com/talks/carol_dweck_the_power_of_believing_that_you_can_improve?language=en
- Body language – Amy Cuddy
https://www.ted.com/talks/amy_cuddy_your_body_language_may_shape_who_you_are
- Kristen Neff – Self Compassion
- Window of tolerance - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vYab1q5N9-U>
- Dan Siegel - "The Adolescent Brain"
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=001u50Ec5eY>
- Trauma and the brain.
<https://youtu.be/4-tcKYx24aA>
- Emma McAdam from Therapy in a nutshell about the Triune Brain.
<https://youtu.be/T46SjQ8Cqbc>
- Understanding Trauma from Phoenix Australia
<https://youtu.be/v60Pi87sqhl>
- <https://innermammalinstitute.org/> - Loretta Breuning for info re brain hormones / chemicals.

PODCASTS

- PODCASTS:
- Therapist Uncensored <https://www.therapistuncensored.com/>
- Emerging Minds
- Creating Social Change - One Connection at a Time
- Trauma Informed Education with Dr Kay Ayre

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- Linked In
 - Lori Desautels
 - Michael McKnight
 -
- Facebook
 - Between The lines – Adult literacy
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- Organisations
- Australian Childhood Trauma
- Blue knot
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- Counselling services / further resources
- <https://www.innermelbpsychology.com.au/low-cost-counselling-melbourne/>
- Fine Print – Australia's LLN journal available with a VALBEC subscription.
<https://valbec.org.au/>
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