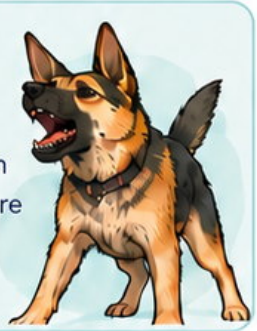
What happens in my brain?

A model to help you understand stress and choose your next step.

ALARM / GUARD DOG

Amygdala

Helps notice possible threats. Works with other brain and body systems to prepare a response.



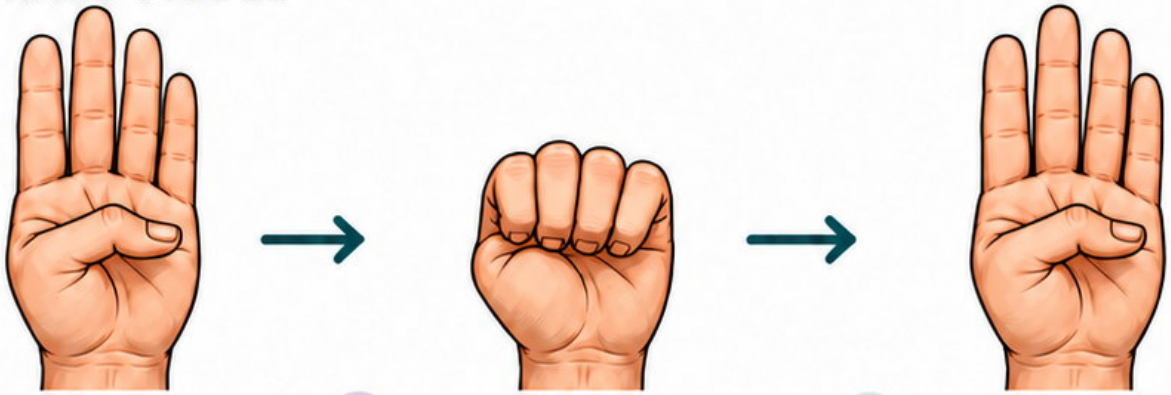
THINKING / PLANNING

Prefrontal cortex

Behind your forehead. Helps with planning, pausing, and consequences. High stress can make these skills harder to use.



TRY THE HAND MODEL



1 TUCK YOUR THUMB

Hold one palm open. Fold your thumb across it.

2 FOLD YOUR FINGERS

Cover your thumb with your fingers: your "lid" is on.

3 LIFT YOUR FINGERS

Lift your fingers: your "lid" is flipped.

The thumb stands in for deeper brain systems, including the amygdala. The front of the folded fingers reminds us of the prefrontal cortex.

A reaction is a clue, not a label. You cannot tell everything by looking.

This is a metaphor. Your brain does not literally open or switch off. Under high stress, thoughtful choices can become harder.

PROTECTIVE REACTIONS CAN LOOK DIFFERENT

FIGHT

Wanting to argue, shout, or strike back.



FLIGHT

Feeling an urge to escape.



FREEZE

Feeling stuck or unable to find words.



Regulate, then solve

You can still feel upset and choose a safe next step.

1 NOTICE

What changes do I notice in my body or thoughts?

Examples: tight jaw, fast heartbeat, or thoughts racing.



2 PAUSE

Give yourself time before you speak, act, or hit send.

"I need a minute before I answer."



3 REGULATE

Help your body calm down.

Try slow, comfortable breaths, feel your feet on the floor, or ask for support.



4 RECHECK

Can I listen, think about my options, and choose what to do?

What happened? What am I guessing?



5 RESPOND

Return to the problem when you can think more clearly.

Explain what you need, listen, and work out a safe next step.



! NOT READY YET?

Take more time, try another tool, or ask for support. You can still feel upset and make a safe choice.

If there is danger or bullying, get adult help now.

FLIP YOUR LID

My brain when my lid flips

Worksheet 1 | Use yourself or a fictional person. Personal details may stay private.

Name or initials (optional) _____ Date _____

1. What does the guard dog nickname tell us about the amygdala?



_____

_____

_____

2. What does the prefrontal cortex help us do?



_____

_____

_____

3. Match each reaction to its description. Write A, B, or C.

FIGHT ____ | **FLIGHT ____** | **FREEZE ____**

A. Feeling stuck or unable to find words.
B. Wanting to argue or strike back.
C. Feeling an urge to escape.

4. One early sign in my body, thoughts, or actions could be...

_____

_____

_____



5. GROUP CHAT MOMENT

Someone posts about you. Your hands shake and you want to send a hurtful reply.
Circle: SOLVE IT / NOT YET.

What tells you that you need a pause? What could you do first?
If there is a threat, seek adult help immediately.

_____

_____

_____

EXIT: Why can a pause help you solve a conflict thoughtfully?

_____

_____

_____

My lid plan

Worksheet 2 | Keep this plan. Personal sharing is optional.

Name or initials (optional) _____ Date _____

CHANGES IN MY BODY	CHANGES IN MY THOUGHTS	WHAT I WANT TO DO →
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

What I notice when I first start to feel upset:

_____

_____

What I notice when it gets harder to think clearly:

_____

_____

TWO WAYS I CAN HELP MY BODY CALM DOWN AT SCHOOL

1. _____
2. _____



An action I need to put on hold while I calm down:

_____

_____



What I can say when I need a break:

_____

_____



Before I respond: What happened? What am I guessing?

_____

_____



An adult I can ask for help:

_____

_____



When and how I will return to the problem:

_____

_____

NOTICE > PAUSE > REGULATE > RECHECK > RESPOND