Lid flip + calm-down tools

Use Dr. Dan Siegel’s hand model and the familiar Brain Story animal language to teach support before problem solving.

A simple brain story

Wise owl: thinking and planning. Guard dog: noticing danger and strong feelings. Memory saver: remembering and learning. These are characters in a teaching metaphor, not literal separate brains.



Together



Strong stress



Support + check

1. Notice + model · January Week 1

Homer’s tower falls. His hands squeeze and he wants to throw a block. Tuck the thumb into the palm and fold fingers over it. Lift the fingers to picture thinking and remembering becoming harder under strong stress.

2. Support + tools · January Week 2

Adult: “I’m here. Let’s keep people and blocks safe.” Offer company, a comfortable slow breath, noticing three things, or a quieter place. Practice while settled; children may watch.

3. Choose + self-talk · January Week 3

“This feeling is strong. I can ask for help and try a tool.” Choose support for the child’s need. Real danger calls for adult safety help, not a breathing task.

4. Check + return · January Week 4

Did something change? Does Homer need more support? Try another tool or helper. When ready, return to the tower problem and a safe plan.

Fresh check + grade bridge

Flora’s drawing tears. 4K: point to a helper. 5K: show a tool and help request. 1st: explain a choice and what to check. 2nd: change support when the first tool does not help.

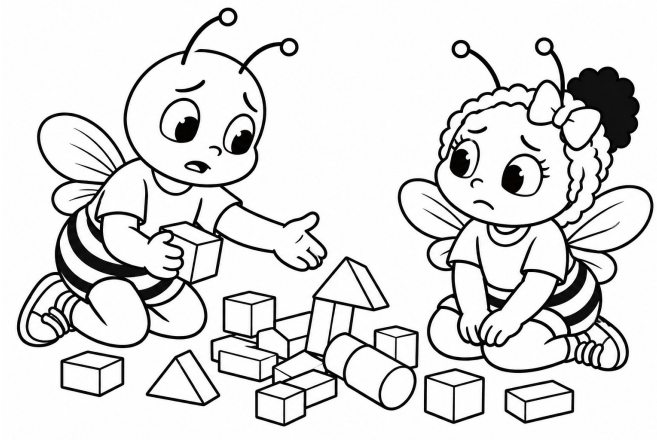
Use the Zones poster to name a feeling. A zone does not prove a lid flip. No brain part literally flies away. Do not assess stillness, eye contact, brain-part names, or a required green zone.

Point, show, draw, sign, or tell. Watching and adult-supported answers are welcome.

Homer can pause and get help

Name: _____

Homer’s tower falls. Point to a feeling clue. Show a grown-up who could help.





Brain helpers together



Strong feeling

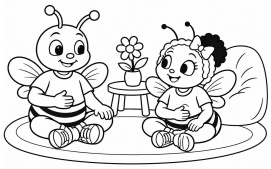


Support, then check

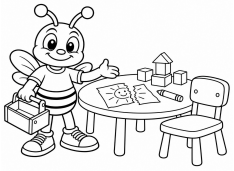
Color a tool Homer could try, or point while a grown-up names it.



Ask a grown-up



Easy slow breath



Notice 3 things

Point, draw, or show Homer getting help.

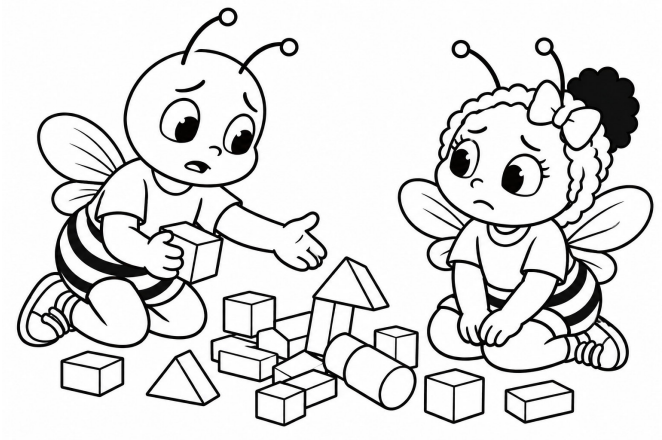
New story: Flora’s drawing tears. Point to a helper or show one helpful tool.

Point, show, draw, sign, or tell. Watching and adult-supported answers are welcome.

Homer can pause and get help

Name: _____

Homer’s tower falls. His hands squeeze. Say or show “Help, please.”





Brain helpers together



Strong feeling

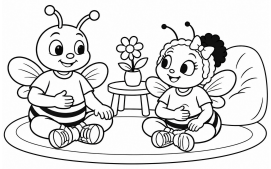


Support, then check

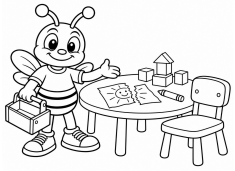
Color a tool Homer could try. Show how he could use it with support.



Ask a grown-up



Easy slow breath



Notice 3 things

Draw Homer trying a tool. Tell a grown-up: does he need more help?

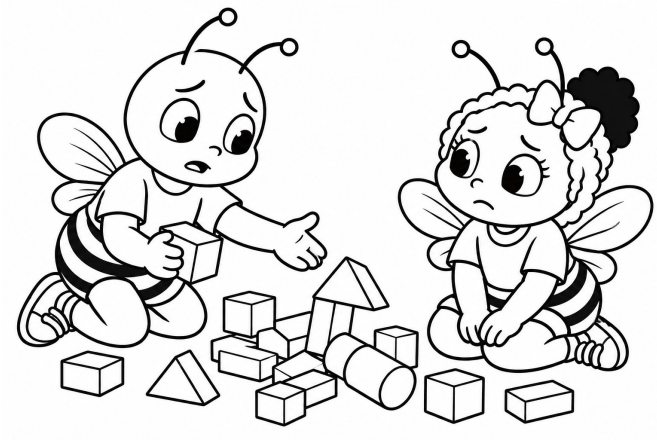
New story: Flora’s drawing tears. Show a help request and a tool she could try.

Point, show, draw, sign, or tell. Watching and adult-supported answers are welcome.

Homer can pause and get help

Name: _____

Homer’s tower falls. His hands squeeze and he cannot remember his plan.





Brain helpers together



Strong feeling



Support, then check

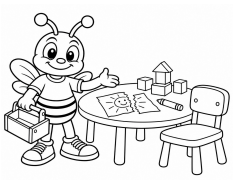
Color a fitting tool or helper. Tell why it could help before he rebuilds.



Ask a grown-up



Easy slow breath



Notice 3 things

Draw or tell what Homer could check after trying his tool. What could he do if he still needs help?

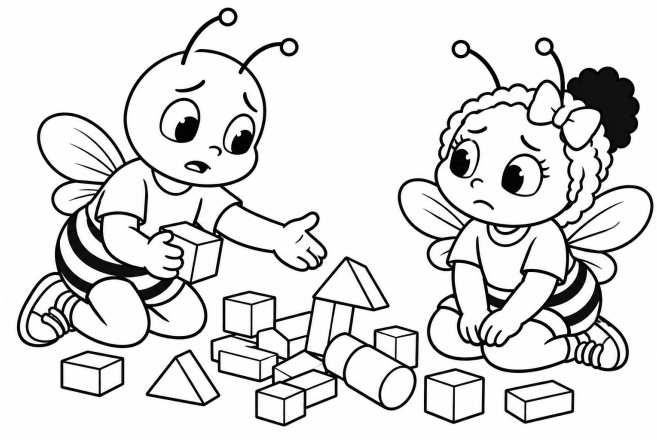
New story: Flora’s drawing tears and she gets very quiet. Choose support and name a clue to check before she tries again.

Point, show, draw, sign, or tell. Watching and adult-supported answers are welcome.

Homer can pause and get help

Name: _____

Homer’s tower falls. Slow counting does not help him yet. He still cannot hear the next direction.





Brain helpers together



Strong feeling

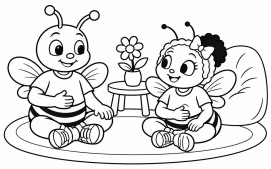


Support, then check

Color a different support Homer could try. Explain what clue helped you choose it.



Ask a grown-up



Easy slow breath



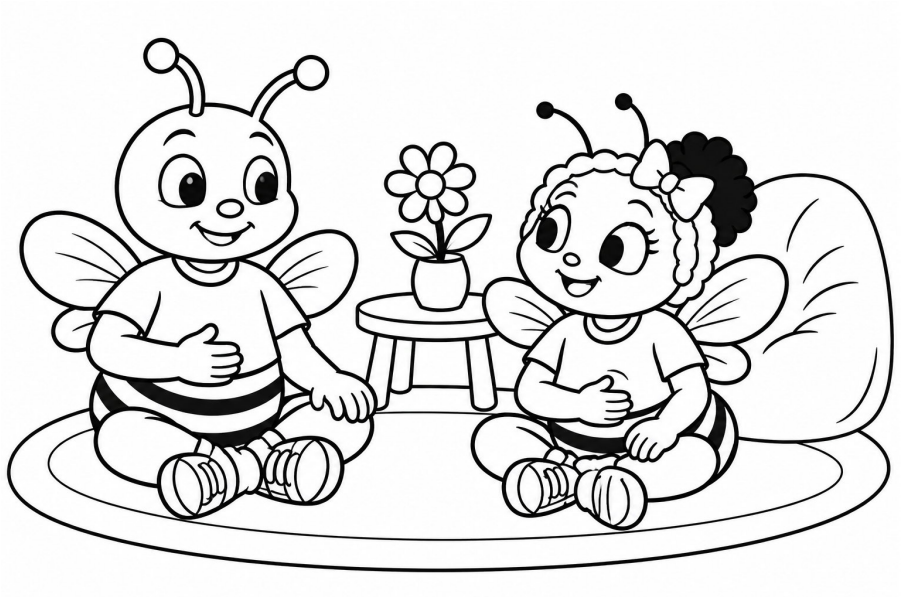
Notice 3 things

Draw or tell a first tool, a backup, and what to check before returning to the tower.

New story: Flora’s drawing tears and she freezes. Compare two supports and explain how an adult can help before problem solving.

Point, show, draw, sign, or tell. Watching and adult-supported answers are welcome.

A brain story we can practice together



When feelings get very strong, thinking and remembering can become harder. We call this a “lid flip.” The hand is a model: tuck the thumb in, cover it with the fingers, and gently lift the fingers to show the story.

Connect first

“I’m here. What do you need?” Offer comfortable space, company, or help. Children do not have to explain the brain story when upset.

Choose and check

Try one short tool: a comfortable breath, noticing three things, gentle movement, or support from a grown-up. Check whether it helped. Another tool or more support may be needed.

Return when ready

Then try a small next step or repair the problem together. For a direction, repeat the important words: “Pencil, workbook, page 10.” Start with fewer steps for younger children.

A tool or helper our family can practice:

Source: Dr. Dan Siegel’s Hand Model of the Brain — drdansiegel.com/hand-model-of-the-brain/

Classroom animal language informed by the supplied Brain Story PDF. Original Hornet Toolbox pages.

Point, show, draw, sign, or tell. Watching and adult-supported answers are welcome.