

Activity

How are you feeling?

Distress Assessment Scale¹:

The following tool is provided to help students identify their emotions and stress level. Distress is any emotion **that you do not want** such as fear, anger, sadness, frustration...

1.) Have each student rate how they are feeling on a scale of 0-10.

0 is not feeling any: fear, anger, sadness, and frustration

10 is feeling intense feelings of: fear, anger, sadness, and frustration

When our distress level reaches a 7 or higher, we tend to not think clearly or act in ways that are consistent with our true selves. Students may use this tool anytime to connect with how they are feeling. When our distress reaches high numbers, this may be an indicator that self-regulation techniques would be helpful. We will be covering some of these exercises in Lesson 4 How to Create a Hopeful Mind. One way we can calm our mind and body is by deep breathing.

Deep Breathing Exercise:

When you take a deep breath, it calms your nervous system and your downstairs brain. Anytime you feel angry, overwhelmed or stressed, taking some deep breaths can help you calm down. Even if you can't control your reactions at the time because your downstairs brain is in charge, you can remember to breathe deeply. This will help you get back into your upstairs brain.

Let's practice. (**Teacher Prompt:** demonstrate deep breathing and then ask students to join you.

Inhale really deep breaths and exhale all of the air so that the exhale is audible.)

2.) What do you think? Do you feel any different after some deep breaths?

Additional Teaching Tools for Lesson 3

*The following list of stories and activities are recommended to enhance student learning, experience, and to encourage and promote further discussions related to each lesson's content. Please choose what fits best for you, your students, and classroom environment. You may locate the resources listed below from the provided book *Chicken Soup for the Soul in the Classroom*.

Stories

p. 99 *Did the Earth Move for You?* (may also be used with Lesson 4 How to Create a Hopeful Mind)

Activities

p. 325 Good Boy/Bad Boy Kinesiology Demo | p. 331 Inner Smile Visualization

¹ Scale provided by Dr. Elizabeth Lombardo

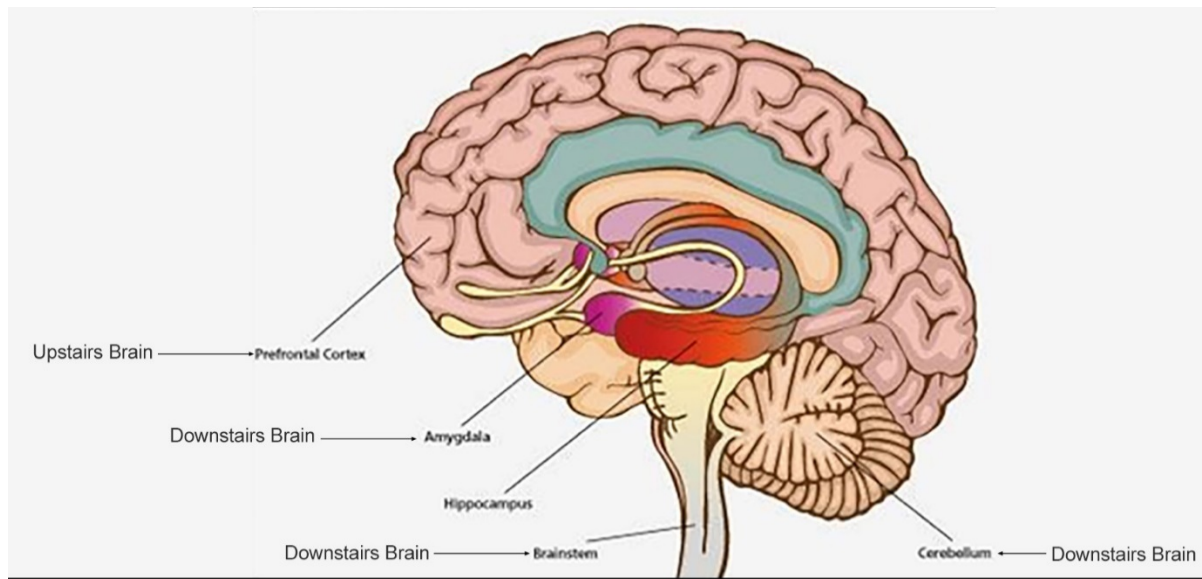


Diagram has been modified to include upstairs/downstairs labels.

Downstairs Brain: Includes the limbic region and brainstem. It is the more primitive part of the brain and is responsible for:

- Basic functions such as breathing, blinking, and heart rate
- Fight or Flight Reaction (Amygdala)
- Strong emotions such as anger or fear

Upstairs Brain: Includes the Cerebral cortex. This is where thinking, imagining, and learning occurs. This part of the brain is responsible for the development of:

- Sound decision making and planning
- Control over emotions and body
- Self-understanding
- Empathy

Adapted from Siegel, D.J., & Bryson, T.P. (2011). *The whole-brain child: Twelve revolutionary strategies to nurture your child's developing mind*. New York: Random House.

New Directions. Integrating the Upstairs and Downstairs Brain: Teaching how to make good decisions in high-emotion situations.

<http://www.newdirections.mb.ca/services/traumaresources/11%20-%20Upstairs%20downstairs%20brain%20%20teaching%20how.pdf>

Diagram. (2014) <http://www.rediscoveringancestralwisdom.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/parts-of-the-brainhippocampus.jpg>