TIP Strategies

Teach Students About Their Brain

WHY: Many students are operating in a "fight, flight, or freeze" state of mind 99 percent of the time, and they don't realize it. They are in survival mode, which is causing a surge of hormones to be dysregulating their bodies and minds. It's not fun for them to be operating at this level, nor is it fun for you. If you teach them about what is happening in their brains during triggered situations, it allows them to then practice regulation strategies.

WHAT/HOW: Hold up your hand making a fist with your thumb tucked under your fingers. Have each student do the same thing with their hands and follow your movements as you make them.

- Explain that this is a model of each student's brain:
  - The **wrist** represents the **brain stem** (responsible for various regulatory functions)
  - The **four fingers** on top represent the **cortex** (responsible for cognitive, critical and rational thinking)
  - The **thumb**, underneath the four fingers represents the **amygdala** (responsible for sounding the alarm when trouble is near).
- Explain that when they get triggered, they are "**flipping their lids**" (lift up four fingers), which is causing a surge of cortisol and "fight, flight, or freeze mode."
- Ask your students to raise their hands if they like how their bodies and minds feel when they "flip their lids" (Most students will put their hands down, as being in "fight, flight or freeze" mode is not fun.
- Ask if they would like for you to teach them how to **make their bodies and minds feel better** when they get triggered (most will want you to guide them through).
- Show them various rhythmic, repetitive, relational activities to help regulate them. An extremely effective one is described below (**hand breathing**):
  - Have each student hold up their left hand, spreading out their fingers.
  - Take their pointer finger from their other hand and put it at the base of the thumb.
  - They are going to start tracing their fingers SLOWLY, and each time they trace to the top of a finger, they are going to inhale the entire time SLOWLY.
  - They will then hold their breath at the top of each finger
  - When they trace down the other side of the finger, they are going to exhale SLOWLY.
  - Continue with all fingers until you get to the outside of the pinky.

Regulatory Activities

WHY: Through his groundbreaking work, Dr. Bruce Perry discovered that the way to regulate kids when they are in a dysregulated (aka "triggered") state, is to have them do repetitive, relational, rhythmic activities. The explicit use of these activities has helped students who come from traumatic backgrounds regulate and repair to bring them up to developmental speed.

WHAT/HOW: There are a variety of activities that can be done. The most effective that I personally have used are listed below:

- Hand breathing (described in left box)
- Box breathing
- Walking side-by-side
- Using music, rhythm & dance in classroom instruction
- Stress balls
- Squishes/sensory balls
- Q-tips to tap on desks
- Hoberman's sphere breathing
- Finding your pulse (can turn into a lesson where students find their pulse & graph it, write about it, etc.)

Mind Maps

WHY: Research has shown that many cases of students who appear to have ADHD or ODD are actually suffering from trauma-related occurrences. Dr. Bruce Perry created mind maps to help identify which part of a student's brain is not as developed as it should be, then this information is utilized to prescribe appropriate interventions based on the developmental age of the student.

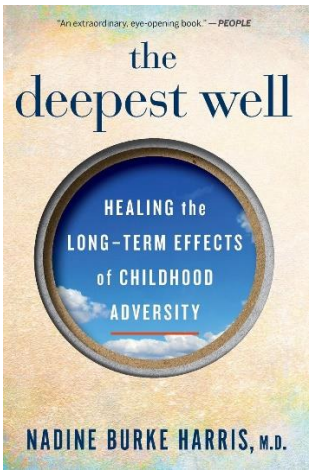
WHAT/HOW: If you are interested in doing a mind map of a student, please contact me at kristenmiller@withheartproject.com to discuss.

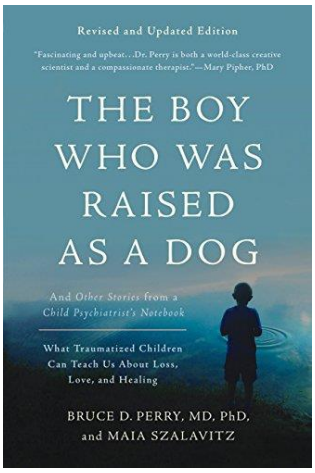
Other TIP Resources/Strategies:

Additional detailed strategies can be found in my book – be sure to go to **www.withheartproject.com/book** to get your free copy ☺

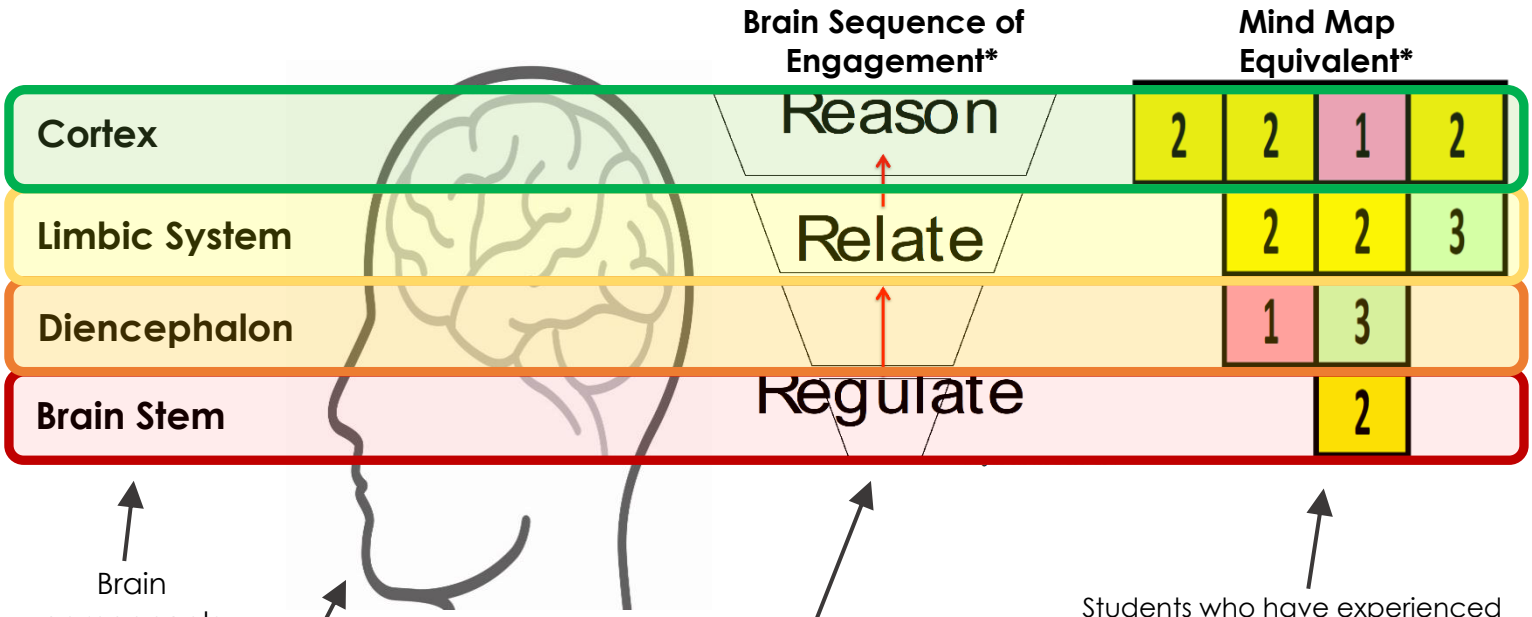
Additional Resources

Following are two books that provide more information about the science of students who come from trauma-related backgrounds.





How Our Brain Works



Brain components

Brain diagram

When information comes into our brains from the outside world, we **process** it from the **bottom up**; if we are operating in a "fight, flight, or freeze" mode, there is no way we'll be able to process high-level cognitive concepts like those taught in academic classes

Students who have experienced past trauma often get stunted developmentally; mind maps can be great for identifying what age the student experienced the trauma, and thus what parts of the brain need to be regulated and "brought up to speed"

*Courtesy of Dr. Bruce Perry, Neurosequential Model of Education, www.childtrauma.org