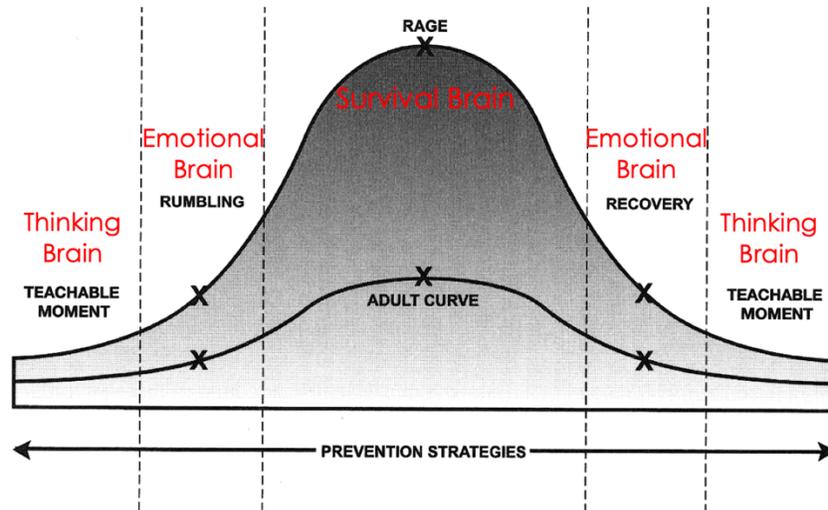


Helping Your Child Stay Regulated

Sarah C. Wayland, Ph.D.

Below is a graph that shows the phases of dysregulation. The higher you are on the curve, the more you are dysregulated.

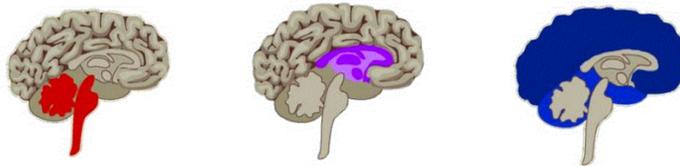


Brenda Smith Myles & Ruth Aspy

During each phase, different parts of the brain are activated, as described below. All three regions work together in Thinking Brain. You lose access to your neocortex when you are in Emotional Brain (this is the amygdala hijack). And when you are in Survival Brain, you lose access to both the neocortex and the limbic system.

Triune Brain

Survival Brain	Emotional Brain	Thinking Brain
Brain stem & cerebellum	Limbic system	Neocortex
Fight, flight, or freeze	Emotions, memories, habits	Language, imagination, abstract thinking, consciousness
Autopilot	Instinctually-based decisions	Reasoning, rational thought



The Triune Brain in Evolution, Paul MacLean, 1960

How Can You Help Your Child Get Their Power Back?

Help your child maintain an optimal level of arousal:

- Make sure they get regular low-to-moderate intensity exercise.
- Make time to connect with your child with no corrections, questions, or teaching.
- Draw their attention to things that inspire awe.
- Make time for them to engage in activity where they lose track of time (experience Flow).
- Encourage them to work to make the world a better place for all.
- Structure their world so that it feels challenging, but manageable.

When in emotional brain mode:

- No talking! Use calm and soothing tones.
- Figure out what is causing the problem, remove the stressor.
- Be a calm and loving presence.
- Help your child feel safe.
- Co-regulate (take a walk together, sing together, breathe together, do something... together).
- Do *any* type of deep, slow diaphragmatic breathing—during which you visualize filling up the lower part of your lungs just above your belly button like a balloon...and then exhaling slowly (I like Square Breathing – in for a count of 4, hold for a count of 4, out for a count of 4, hold for a count of 4. Repeat.)

When in survival brain mode:

- No talking!
- Be a calm and loving presence.
- Help your child feel safe.
- Wait for the storm to pass.

After it is over:

- Have your child tell you the story of what happened using a storyline arc with a beginning, middle, and end.
- Brainstorm with your child about what would have helped so you can use those strategies next time. Use Martin Seligman's STEPS:
 - Say what the problem is
 - Think about possible solutions (brainstorm without judgment)
 - Evaluate each proposed solution (each person rates it – good, neutral, bad – and explains their rating)
 - Pick the best solution (the solution with the highest average rating that was not rated as bad by any involved party)
 - See how it works (expect to revise your approach)