



**Our Brain Book** by Kristin Hovious - Copyright 2018

- To my children who are continually my best teachers, and my husband who provides so much support to bring this work to the world.
- To Ravenswood Elementary School – for supporting Positive Discipline in the early childhood classrooms since 2006
- To Principal Nathan Manaen for saying “Yes,” to parent training, and always being courageous and direct in our conversations.
- To the Positive Discipline Association for promoting the philosophy of Alfred Adler and Rudolf Dreikurs across the globe – and all the PDA members past and present. It is a joy to learn with you.
- To Jane Nelsen, Lynn Lott, Jody McVittie and all the other Positive Discipline authors for bringing these practices to life through writing **and** experiential learning. Transformation happens when adults learn to feel and connect through our shared experiences.
- To Dan Siegel and Tina Bryson – your work together has helped so many adults in growing their skills to be more peaceful with children.
- To SEL Chicago’s Partner Schools and Teachers – thank you for your trust and exploration together.
- And finally, for B, who showed so many that this work is valid and important. #brainscienceismagic

<p>Here is our brain – say, “Hello!” Ours brains are <b>AMAZING</b> as they learn and grow It has three parts – purple red and blue Now I’ll tell you what they do</p> <p>The biggest is the purple part, Its jobs are many and complex. Creative thinking, wisdom, and learning Are the roles of the cortex.</p> <p>Every part has an essential question<sup>1</sup> Something each part looks for and discerns Cortex is always asking “How can I solve this problem?” “What here can I learn?”</p> <p>The cortex learns and listens Only when I’m feeling calm and good When I’m angry, upset or scared It stops working like it should.</p> <p>Sometimes something happens, Something small or something big. And quick, before my Cortex knows it.</p>	<p>It stops working when I <b>flip my LID!</b><sup>2</sup></p> <p>Remember those two other parts - The red part and the blue? They take over when my lid is flipped And this is what they do.</p> <p>The red part is the <b>Brainstem</b> - Lizards have it, tigers too. Brainstem scans the world for threats - It’s always seeking clues.</p> <p>Brainstem’s essential question is “<b>Am I safe?</b>” And if the answer I feel is “NO!” It signals “Fight! “Flight!” or “Freeze!” The only choices that it knows.</p> <p>Running away, punching or frozen still Is the BEHAVIOR you may see. It’s my brains solution, in that moment, To find the SAFETY that I’m seeking and the SOOTHING that I need.</p> <p>Brainstem’s choices may not seem logical – They may not seem <b>right</b></p>	<p>Please remember that CORTEX manages RIGHT and LOGIC Brainstem only knows freeze, fight or flight</p> <p>Blue is where memories and feelings live It loves and hopes and dreams. It’s called the LIMBIC SYSTEM So sensitive it seems.</p> <p>LIMBIC’s essential question is: “Am I cared for? Am I loved?” And when I feel the answer’s NO, You’ll see behaviors CORTEX can’t control from above.</p> <p>Blaming, shaming, and name calling, Are the BEHAVIORS you may be seeing. It’s LIMBIC’s solution in that moment To soothe the hurt and wounds I’m feeling.</p> <p>Limbic’s CHOICES may not seem logical – They may not seem right. Please remember, CORTEX manages RIGHT and LOGIC LIMBIC only knows emotional protection and fight<sup>3</sup></p>
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<sup>1</sup> Essential questions from descriptions used in by Dr. Becky Bailey, Founder of Conscious Discipline, in a filmed TEDx event at The Pine School in Hobe Sound, FL accessed here: <https://consciousdiscipline.com/videos/tedx-wiring-the-brain-for-success/> and used in this work with permission.

<sup>2</sup> Dr. Daniel J. Siegel’s “Hand Model of the Brain,” as first described in Siegel, D.J. (1999). *The developing mind: Toward a neurobiology of interpersonal experience* (1st ed.). New York, NY: Guilford Press. © 1999 Mind Your Brain, Inc., and later depicted by visual image in Siegel, D.J. (2010). *Mindsight: The*

new science of personal transformation. New York, NY: Random House. © 2010 Mind Your Brain, Inc. Used with permission.  
<sup>3</sup> When I shared this story with the fourth grader who inspired the writing, he wanted to make sure that he also felt the “blue” brain’s responses happen

Do you ever yawn when someone yawns?  
Or tear up when someone cries?  
These are **mirror neurons** at work -  
Our brains creating connection ties.

Our brains are wired to connect -  
To reflect back what we see  
So sometimes when someone's lid is flipped,  
It flips the lid in *me*.

When you see me struggling -  
Behaving from the red part or the blue,  
Mirror neurons make it challenging to stay  
grounded,  
**And** that's what I **need** from you!

Before I can make amends, be creative,  
Problem solve or think things through,  
I need to calm down to use my CORTEX  
To learn and connect with you.

If you try to teach me  
In the red zone or the blue  
I can't listen, learn or process  
It will frustrate me **AND** you!

It will help to have a calming space  
Where my body can trust I'm safe, loved and  
protected  
In the classroom or at home,  
This space helps my brain get reconnected.

To help me grow resilience  
Let's co-create this a special spot  
A place to go when I'm flipped  
When my stomach's tied up in knots.<sup>4</sup>

Building skills to manage stress  
To stay in my brain's purple zone  
Takes caring, time, practice - patience too  
Like building muscle tone.

Growing my brain's ability  
To stay "un-flipped" **all day**  
Is something I'll learn over time,  
And I'll make mistakes along the way

Stay calm and grounded in my upset.  
Pause and breathe and be respectful.  
It will take your time, care and trust -  
And will be really helpful.

We know now, anatomy shows us.  
Our brains and friendships will work better  
When we calm down before problem solving -  
Because we're all in this together.

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when he feels he is "fighting for his rights." This made me begin to wonder if some of the inconvenient behaviors adults may see in children are behaviors of **protest**, but because our children are

developing their skills of "peaceful protest" the protest is categorized as misbehavior (or bad behavior).

<sup>4</sup> A helpful book for co-creating this spot at home is **Jared's Cool Out Space**, by

Jane Nelsen and Ashlee Wilkin and illustrated by Bill Schorr, Positive Discipline, 2013.