



'Learning for Life'

# Coping with challenging behaviour



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Why do children  
behave in challenging  
ways?

What strategies can  
be used at home and  
at school?

A chance to discuss  
particular 'moments'  
and share tips



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Our philosophy: the behaviour we see is usually a symptom with an underlying cause rather than a child being ‘naughty’.



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**FIGHT**



**FLIGHT** oohlala!



**FREEZE**



Ambition

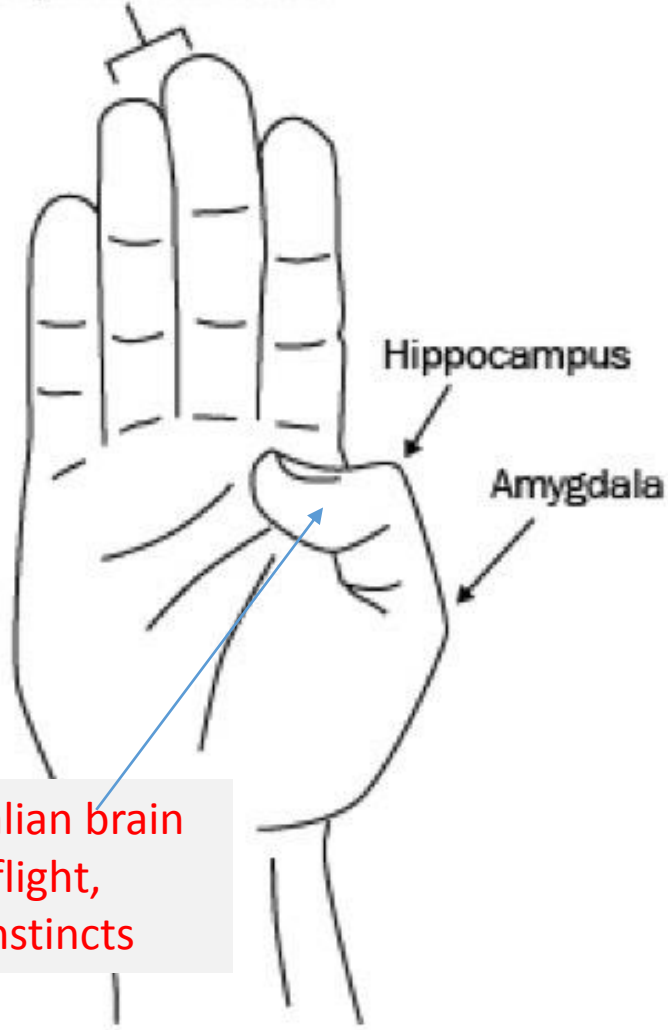
Equal Opportunities

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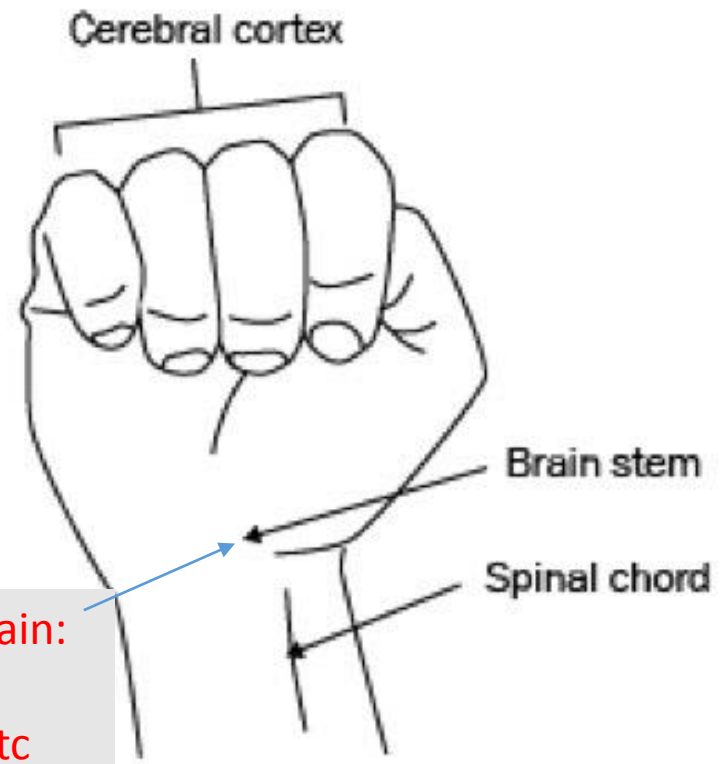
# The Hand Model of the Brain

Middle prefrontal cortex



mammalian brain  
– fight, flight,  
freeze instincts

The thinking bit!  
Reason, empathy,  
self- regulation



Reptilian brain:  
controls  
breathing etc



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When we perceive a threat, the first thing we all do is to 'flip our lid'!



We need to self-regulate to get our emotions back under control.

Adults tend to be better at this.

Children are still learning!

# The role of emotions



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There are 5 basic emotions: anger, sadness, joy, fear, disgust.



Inside out

But they combine to make 242 (at the latest count)!

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## The role of emotions

We are literally unable to make a decision without engaging the emotional aspects of our brain.

All those emotions are useful. There's no such thing as a bad emotion.

For example: **sadness** down regulates. Why does it exist? It's an alarm call when things go wrong. I am not ok please come and rescue me.

All emotions are ok. We need children to understand that it is ok to be angry; it's not ok to get violent etc.

We should not ask children to suppress emotions but to regulate them.





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Children need to learn how to regulate their emotions

We are born with a very primitive social engagement and stress regulation systems eg baby cries on being born.

But everything else needs to be learned. Children learn by copying. We need to teach and model self-regulation to our children.

Stress is not the problem. It is good for you! Some stress helps you learn! It is finding ways to tolerate it that are crucial.

It can often be harder at home because you are receiving tired children at the end of the day. Children may ‘flip’ because:

- 1) They are tired.
- 2) They have developed a habit/ pattern of behaviour.
- 3) It is easier for school staff to deal calmly because of consistent routines, expectations, children's understanding of consequences etc.

## Strategies



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- 1) Stay calm and self -regulate!
- 2) Name the emotion so children understand what it is they are feeling. E.g. “I can see you are feeling angry.”
- 3) Provide time and space: Don’t try and tackle the challenging behaviour there and then. If a child is in fright, flight or freeze mode you cannot reason with them until they have put the lid back on.’
- 4) Teaching calming techniques (when they are calm!) so that you can encourage them to use them when they are needed (fives, breathing/ slow shushing x 3)
- 5) Problem solve. Try and identify the root cause and discuss better strategies to use.

Children do need consequences.

But choose the right time to discuss these. It is much better if negotiated consequences have been agreed before.



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Keep consequences proportionate.

In the immediate aftermath (when they are calm) ask what can we we do right now to make things better. (e.g pick up the things that have been strewn around/ apologise to somebody etc)

Please don't use the term – the naughty step.

Negotiate a 'safe space' they can go to. When they are 'flipping' encourage them to go to their safe place to calm down.

It won't always work. But keep doing it (and try to self-regulate yourself)! Try and get your own lid back on first! The more consistent we use this approach the greater the chance that children will develop more self-control.

Test it out on your partner/ family member!