



# EARLY ADOLESCENT HEALTH AND WELLBEING

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*Year 7, 2021*

TEENAGERS





Welcome to being a parent of a teenager. Prepare for a large amount of eye rolling, emotional outbursts, and thoughts of running away. And that's just the parents.



**PARENTS BEFORE TEENAGERS**



**PARENTS AFTER TEENAGERS**

**BRACE YOURSELVES**



**ADOLESCENCE IS COMING**

Raising teenagers is so much fun!

SAID NO ONE  
EVER.



som<sub>ee</sub>cards  
user card



**BEWARE:  
HORMONAL  
TEENAGER INSIDE**

## MYTH ABOUT TEENAGERS

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- Raging hormones make teenagers crazy!
- This is false.
- Hormones do increase during this period, but what adolescents experience is primarily the result of changes in the development of the brain.

# THE EARLY ADOLESCENT AND TEENAGE YEARS

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- This is a season of time that will never be repeated
- “Like a speed bump”
- Characterised by:
  - Drive for exploration and drive for independence
  - Drive for social engagement
  - Drive for risk and big reward
  - Operating on BIGGER emotions - their “limbic system” is turbo-charged
- It’s actually a period of big growth
- The “Work” of adolescents, the testing the boundaries, the passion to explore the unknown, can lay the stage for the development of core character traits that will enable them to go on to lead great lives.

# THE GOOD NEWS

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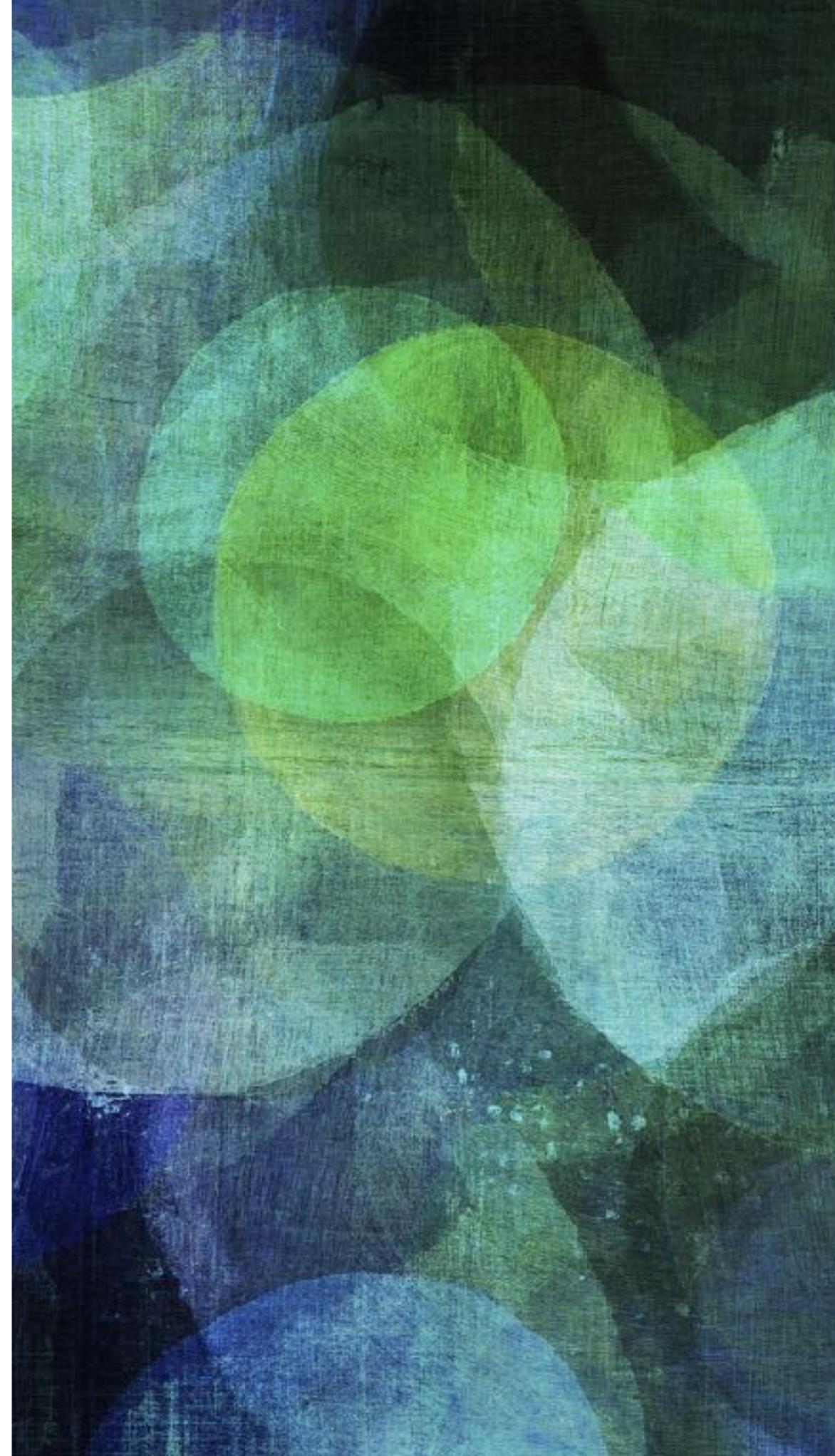
- It's not all scary!
- Teenagers are passionate, fun, affectionate, can think outside the box, creative, caring, energetic, enthusiastic.
- You are already doing a good job!
- You show up, you care.

Kristen Welch

**Parenting is Hard.  
Especially When  
You're Doing It  
Right. - Kristen  
Welch**

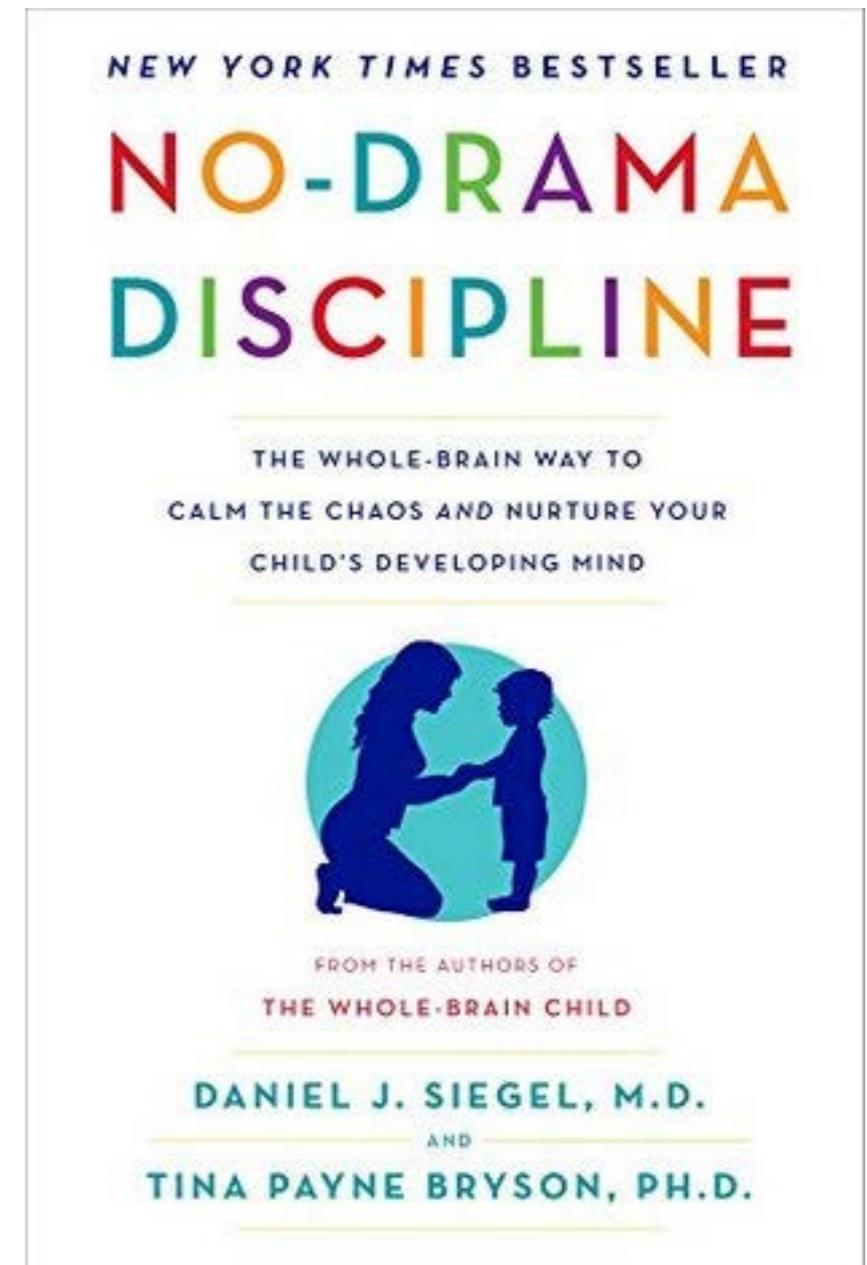
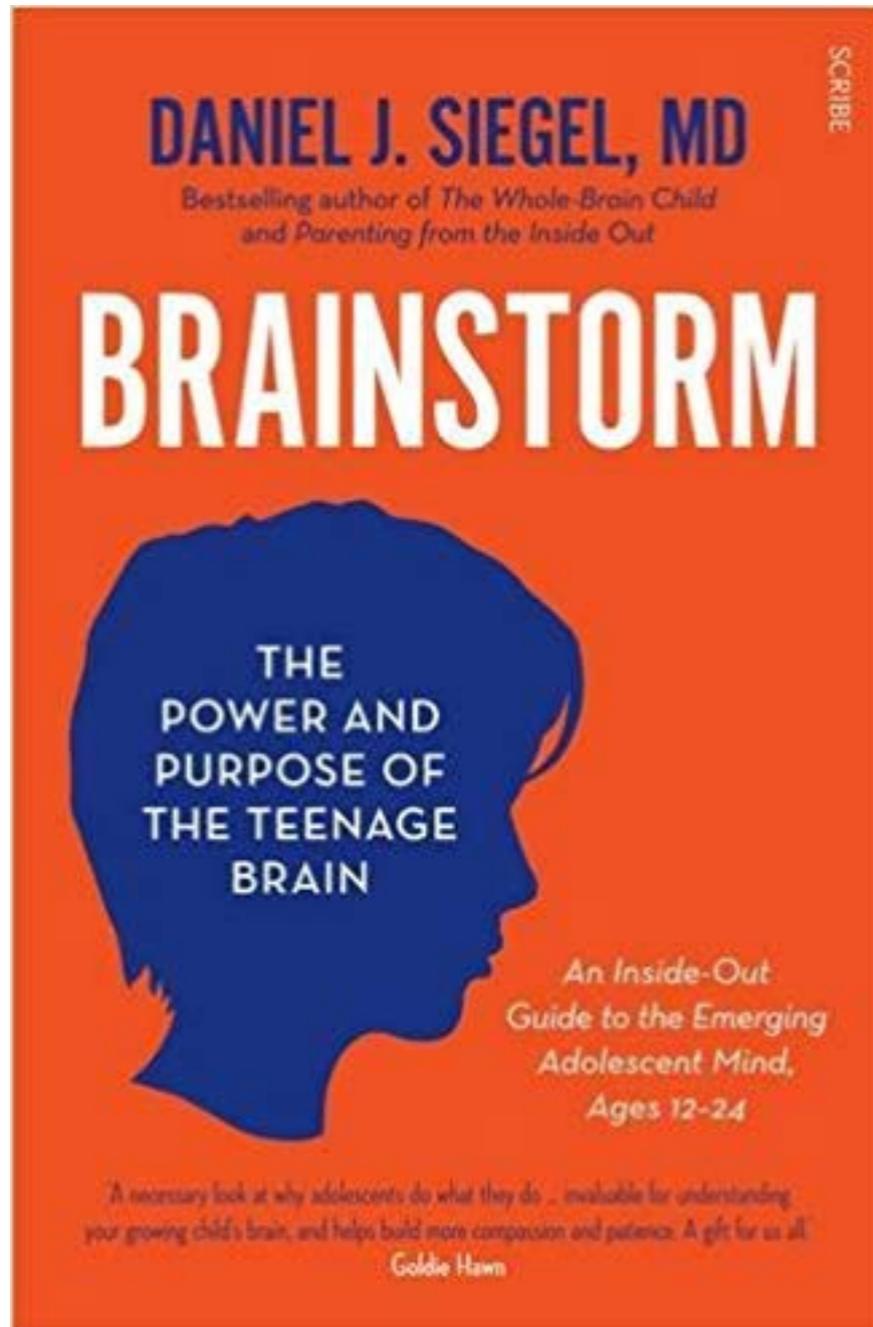
# THIS PRESENTATION:

- 1. The Early Adolescent Brain.*
  - 2. How can we help stimulate neural growth in our early adolescents.*
  - 3. Common issues for Yr 7 students.*
  - 4. Who to contact for help.*
- .....



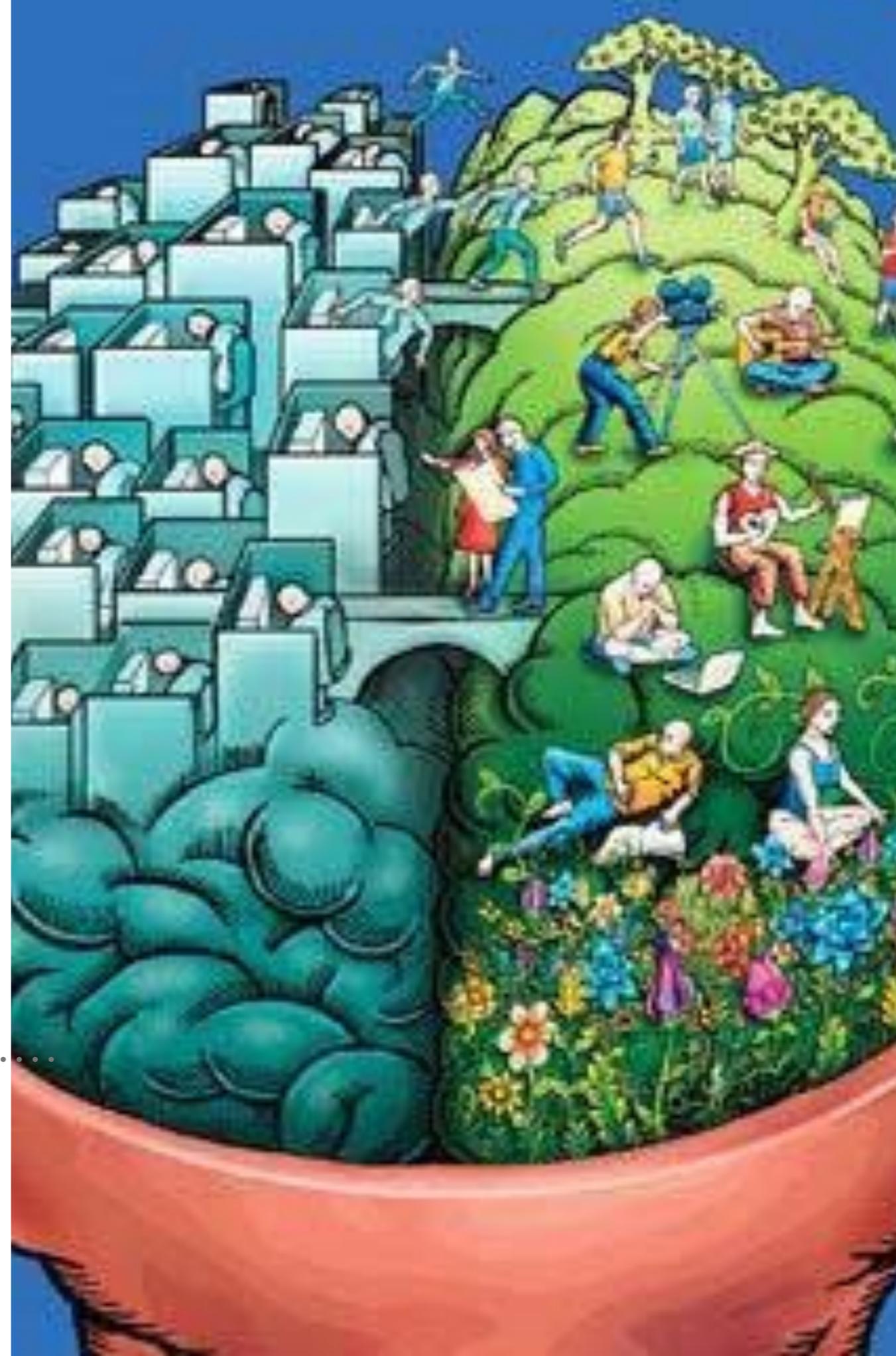
# DAN SIEGEL

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# THE BRAIN IS CHANGING

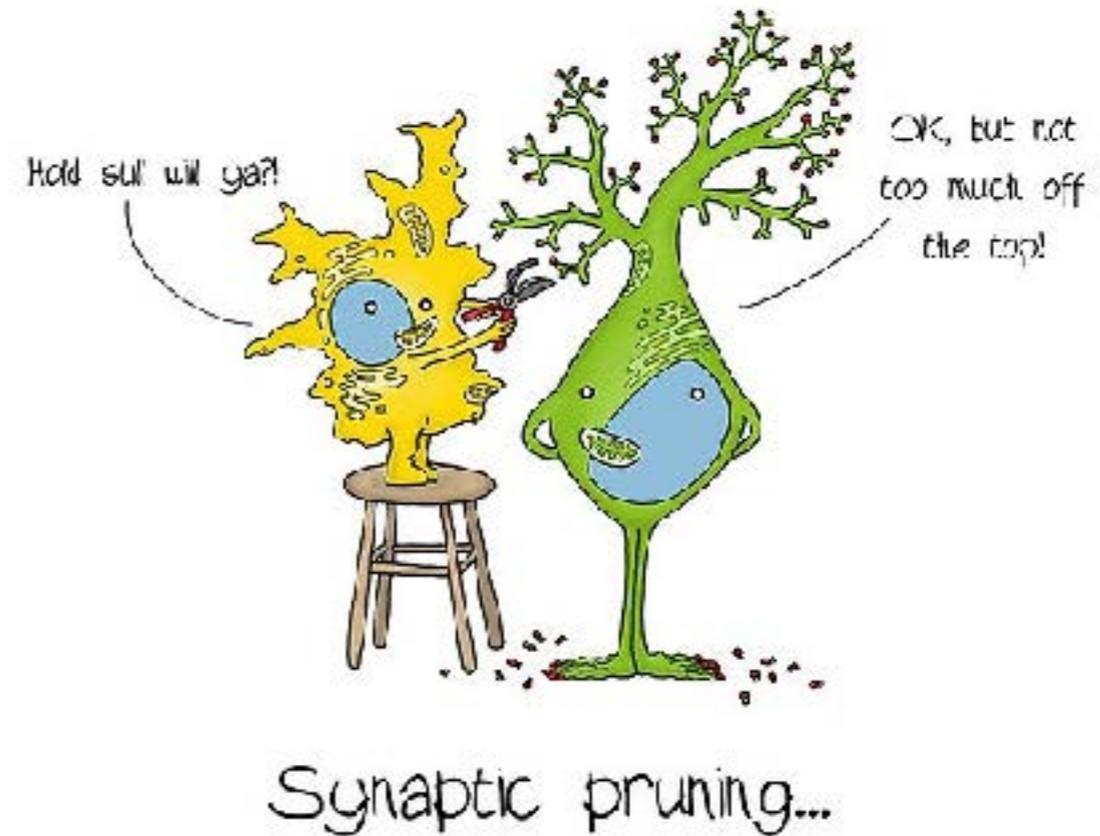
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- In childhood, the brain is like a growing tree, establishing branches and growing leaves.
- Connections or synapses amongst the basic cells (the neurons) are being established.

## *In Early Adolescence:*



- The brain begins to prune itself.
- It decreases the amount of neurons and their connections
- Only our most commonly used patterns of neurons are retained in this pruning.

## SYNAPTIC PRUNING (Density)

AT BIRTH



6 YEARS OLD



14 YEARS OLD



Synapses (neural connections) are created with astonishing speed towards 7 years old, the “synaptic growth spurts” become dense. By teenage years, pruning occurs to remove excess connections in order to make a more refined and efficient adult brain.



**USE IT  
OR  
LOSE IT**

...tell a victim  
of those ecstatic paroxysms which, occasion  
The mention of the galvanic battery, is  
a well-known and very extraordinary case  
the means of restoring to animation a yo  
...rested for two days. This occurred  
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... with some anomalous  
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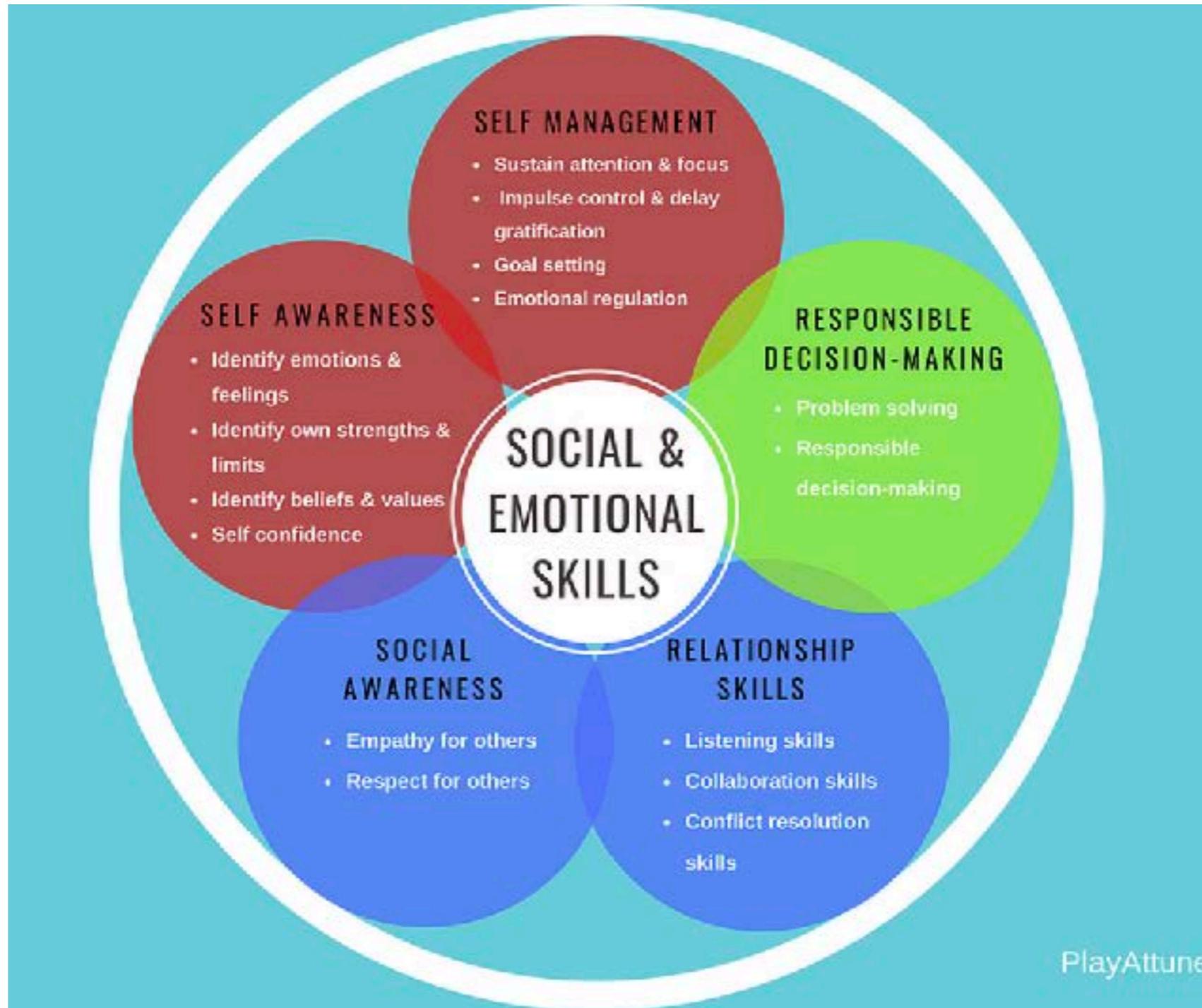
# “THE DOWNSTAIRS BRAIN”

- The “reptilian brain”
- Much more primitive.
- Responsible for strong emotions, fight or flight, protecting ourselves, breathing, sleeping and digestion.
- Automatic Response. Motto: React first, think later! Or:



# “THE UPSTAIRS BRAIN”

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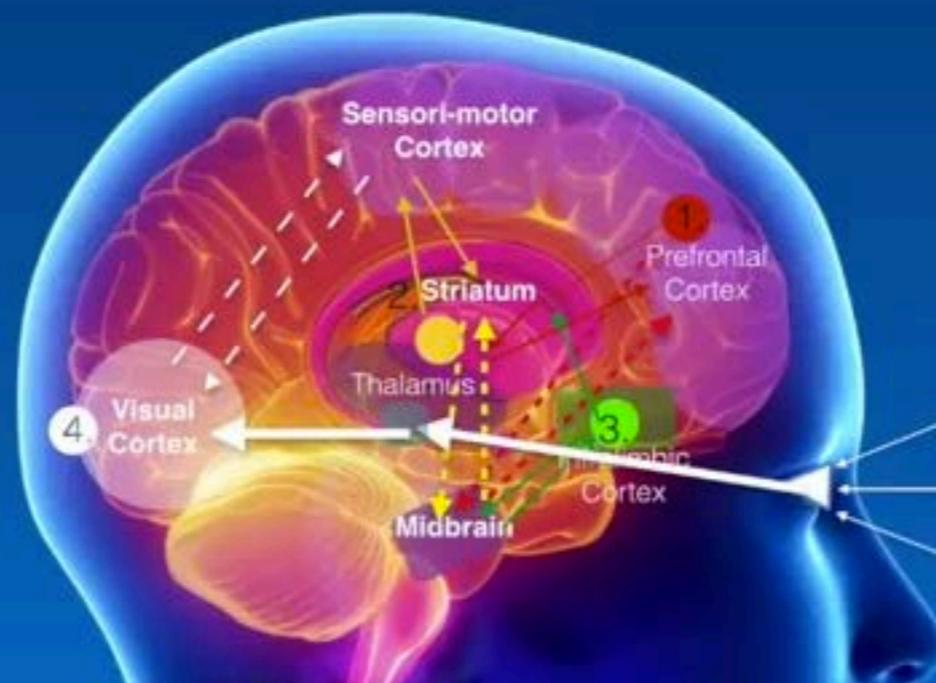
## TO CONSIDER:

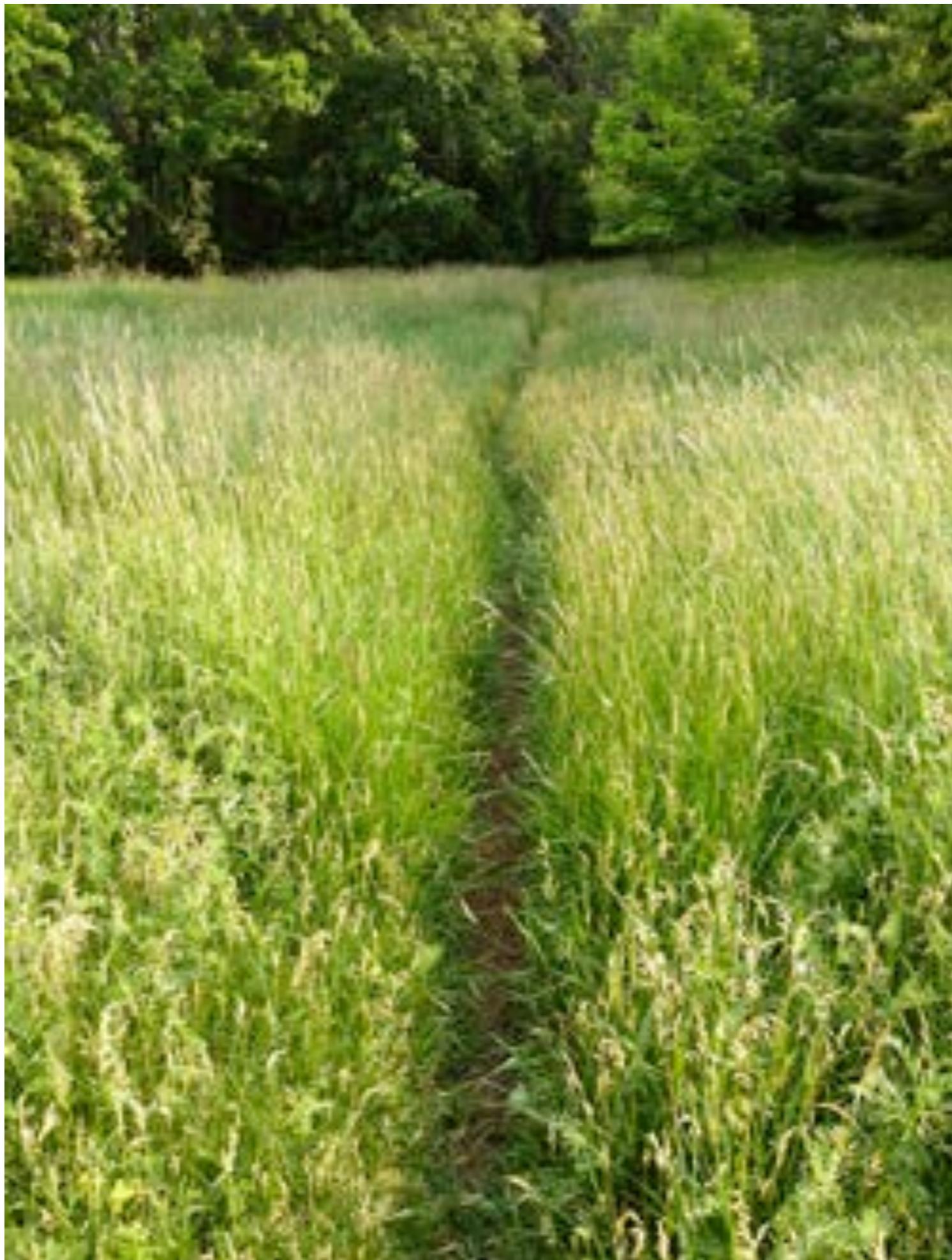
- .....
- “We need to help develop our children’s upstairs brain - along with all of the skills it makes possible - and while doing so, we may need to act as an external upstairs brain along the way, working with them and helping them make decisions they’re not quite capable of making for themselves yet”.

# THE BRAIN IS CHANGEABLE



***“Neurons That Fire Together,  
Wire Together.”***







## KEY MESSAGE

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“If repeated experiences actually change the physical architecture of the brain, then it becomes paramount that we be intentional about the experiences we give our children”



## TO CONSIDER:

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- What do we want our children to experience that will affect their changeable brains?
- What brain connections do you want to nurture?

# HOW TO HELP OUR YOUNG PEOPLE DEVELOP THEIR BRAINS

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S

Stimulate

N

Neural

A

Activation

G

Growth.



# SEVEN DAILY ESSENTIAL MENTAL ACTIVITIES TO OPTIMIZE BRAIN MATTER AND CREATE WELL-BEING

## The Healthy Mind Platter

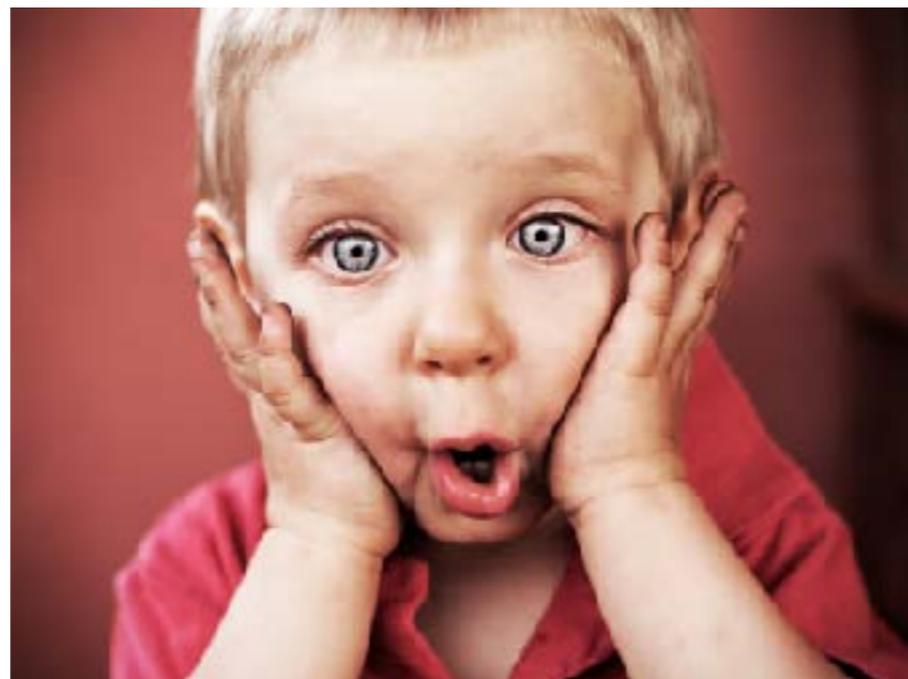


*The Healthy Mind Platter for Optimal Brain Matter*

# WHAT SHOULD I EXPECT FOR YEAR 7?

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- Normal worries and concerns for this year:
  - **Stress**: trying to manage timetable, subjects, classes, new uniform and assessment. It's a big adjustment!
  - **Friendship concerns**.
  - **Worry** around the unknown: consequences, events, camps, anything "different" from primary school.





# HOW TO RESPOND?

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- Normalise. All students feel like this at times!
- Listen and help them feel heard
- **Validate** and allow their feelings
- Engage upstairs brain instead of enraging downstairs brain. (Be their circuit breaker)



## HOW TO RESPOND?

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- Help them to problem solve.
- Hold boundaries firm
- Use natural consequences
- Lower your expectations - “he/she/they should” - expect a behaviour regression...
- Remember what habits you want them to establish.

# WHEN TO BE CONCERNED?

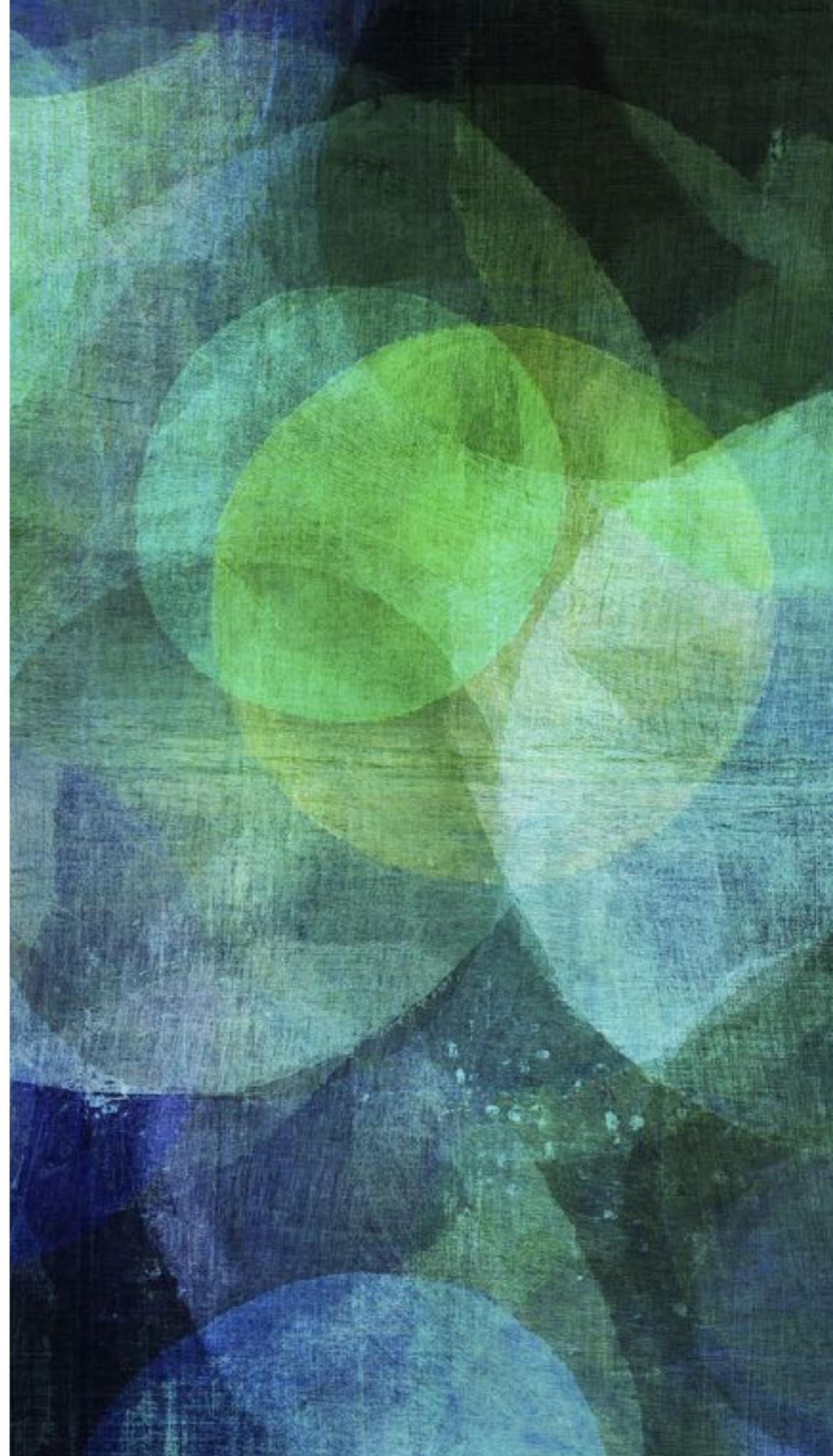
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- When stress or anxiety starts to effect their day to day life
- When you have noticed that they have prolonged periods of feeling overwhelmed, down or not themselves
- When what you usually do to help doesn't work
- When you are not sure how to progress and want advice.



## *What to do?*

- First point of call - your Home Teacher
  - Learning leader or year level coordinator.
  - If confidential, urgent or you want direct advice- you can come straight to me.
- .....



# THE COUNSELLING TEAM

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*Catie Dunlop - Tuesday to Friday (Yr 7-9)*  
*Sue Forbes - Monday to Friday (Yr 10-12)*





# OUR APPROACH

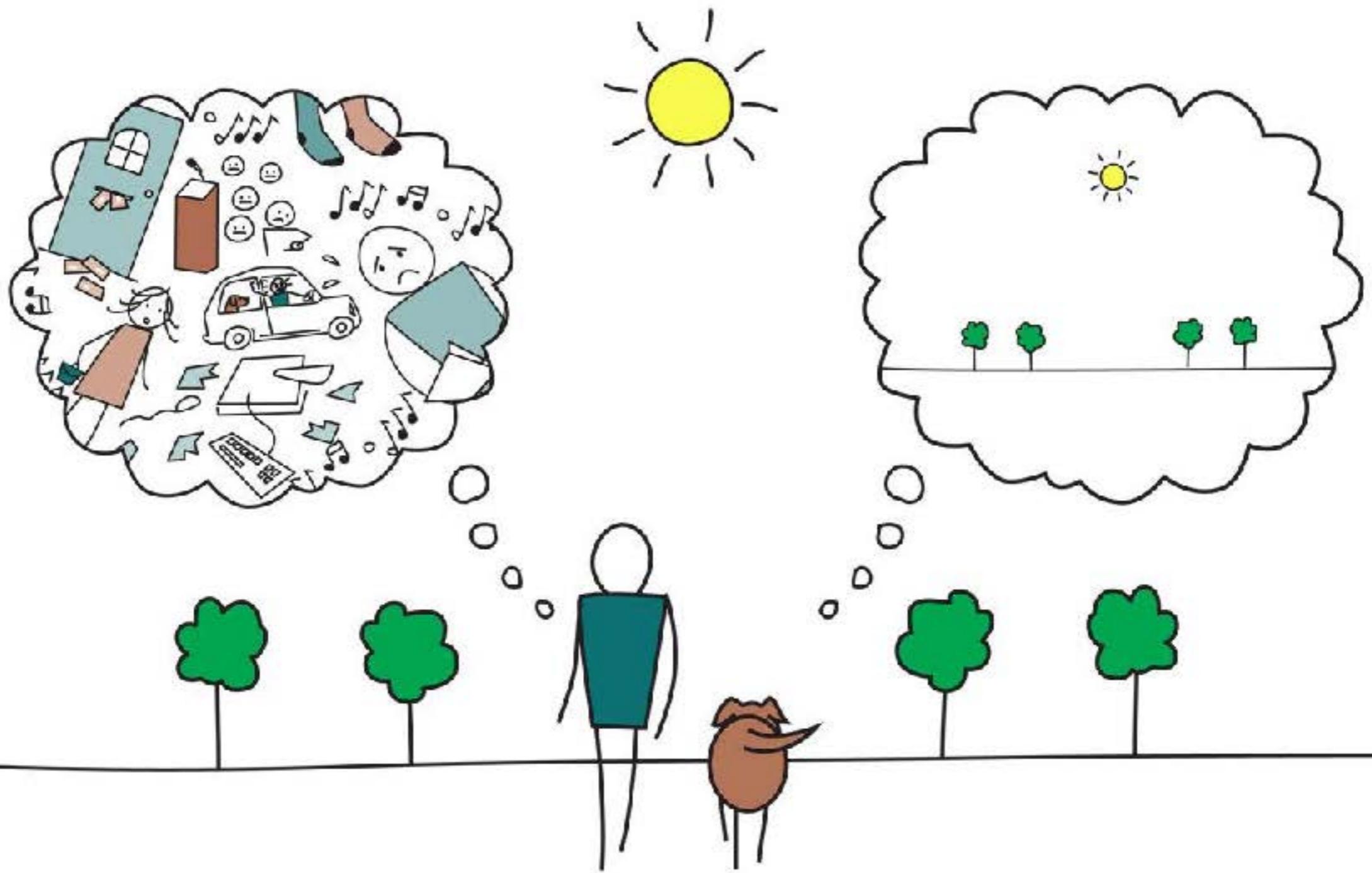
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- ACT: Acceptance and Commitment Therapy
- Mindfulness.

*"mindfulness means paying attention in a particular way; on purpose, in the present moment, and non judgmentally."*

*Jon Kabat-Zinn*

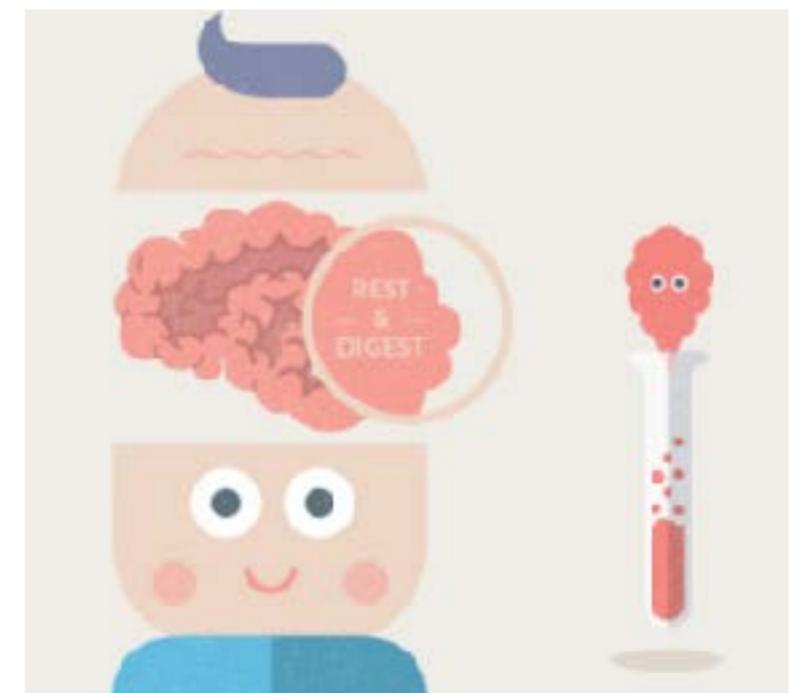
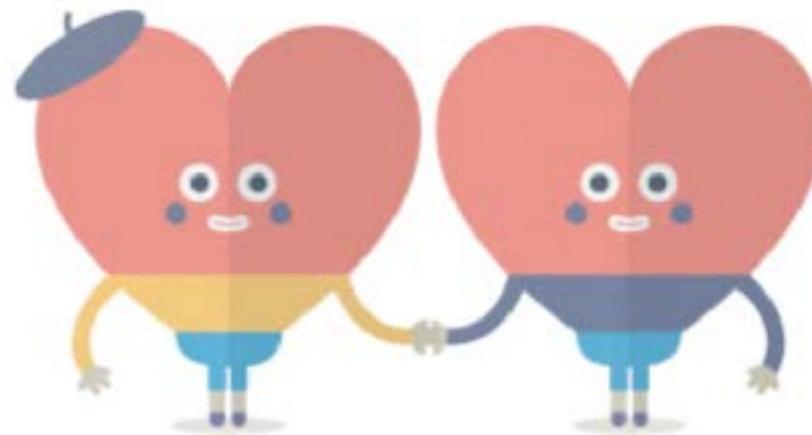
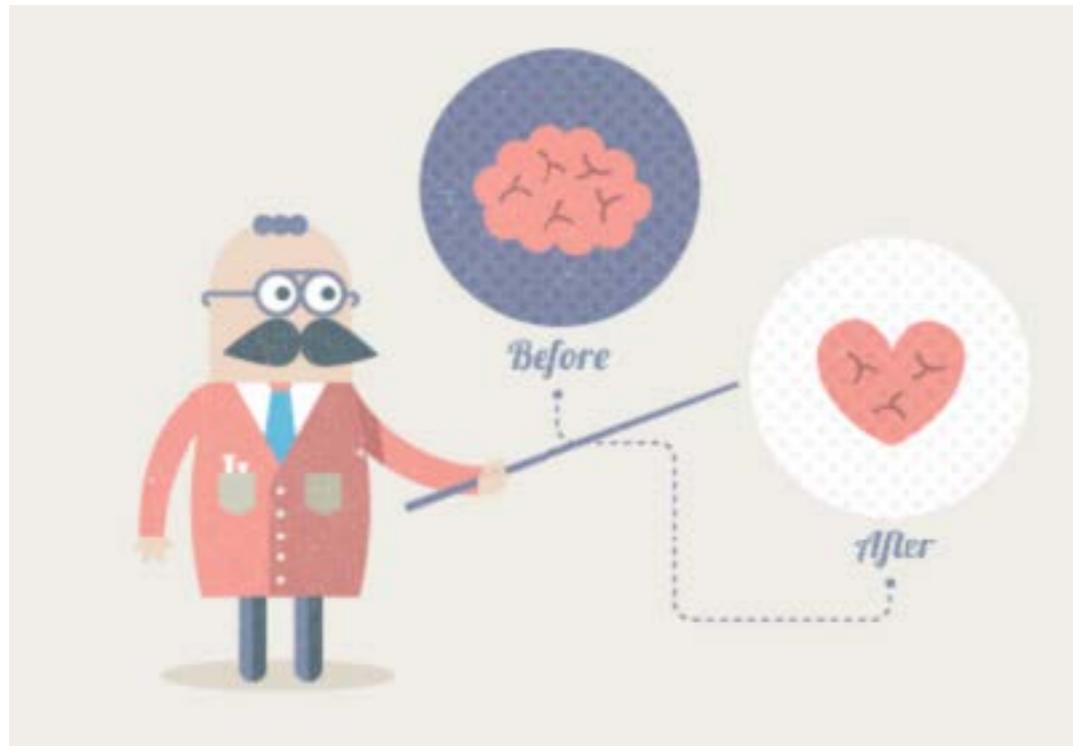




Mind Full, or Mindful?

# HOW IT CHANGES THE BRAIN

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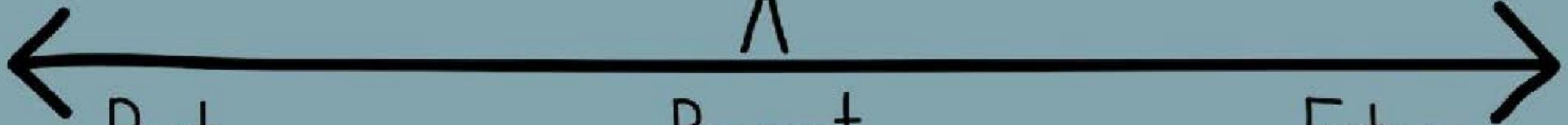
Let me tell the tale  
Of the boy stuck in his head,  
Who spent time thinking about the past,  
And the future with great dread.  
He'd go about his daily life,  
Consumed by all his thoughts,  
He'd miss out on things around him,  
Especially his favourite sports.  
For he was a time traveller,  
A traveller in his mind,  
Who went to the past and future,  
To see what he would find.  
For his body was present in his life,  
But rarely was his mind,  
He didn't take time to do the things that mattered,  
To connect, be brave and kind.  
So in time he learnt to stop,  
Take a breath and look around,  
Bring himself into the present,  
And he was amazed at what he found.  
For he was a human thinking,  
Human analysing, human seeing  
But he'd never taken time  
To simply be a human being.



Your body is present.



Is your mind?



Past

Present

Future



# DROPPING ANCHOR

A Mindfulness Technique

# QUICK TIPS

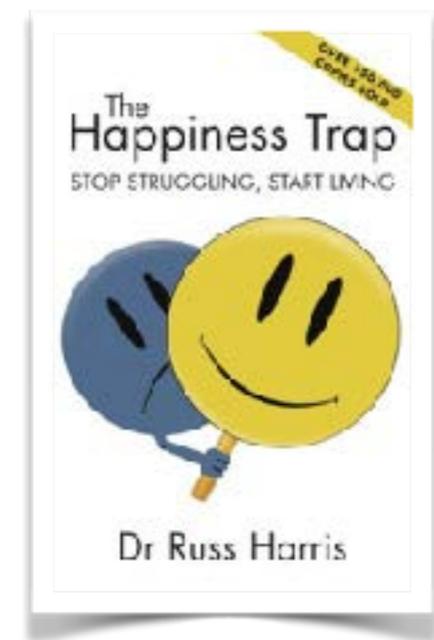
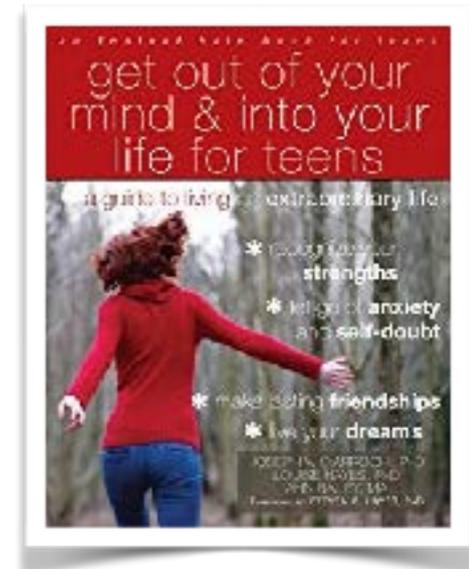
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Focus on Sleep, Exercise and Diet.

Structure and Boundaries - technology

Ask for help when you need it!

Access: SchoolTV





# CONTACT DETAILS:

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