

Becoming Courageous

Notice: Lesson 3

The Brain

Objective:

1. To teach the students the basic anatomy of the brain, especially the amygdala and the prefrontal cortex.
2. To help the students develop an awareness of how their brain works, and how their brain filters out information. This might result in them not seeing the whole picture.
3. To teach the students the hand model of the brain. By using the hand model of the brain, teach the students how they can take control and calm themselves.

Rationale:

1. When you understand how your brain works, you are better able to “manage” it.
2. When we understand how our brain perceives things, we can better understand that other people may have a different perspective.

Alignment to the British Columbia Core Competencies:

Critical Thinking; Analyze and Critique;

1. I can reflect on and evaluate my own thinking
2. I can analyze my own assumptions

Personal Awareness and Responsibility; Self Regulation;

1. I can use strategies that help me manage my feelings and emotions

Personal Awareness and Responsibility; Well Being;

1. I can use strategies to find peace in stressful times

Supporting Literature:

1. Allison Sampson Jackson: [How to Teach the Brain](#)
2. Jeanette Yoffe: [Hand Model of the Brain for Kids](#)

Materials and Resources:

1. Courage Journals. I use exercise books, but you can use any type of book or journal. Courage Journals are used to reflect on the content of the day’s lesson. Each child should have their own.
2. Smartboard, or projector and speakers (to show videos in the lesson)
3. Glitter Bottle: Instructions are on [this webpage](#). You can also make one with a plastic bottle. If you want each child to make a bottle, an easy way to do this is to have each child bring a plastic water bottle to class.

Lesson (approx. 1 hour)

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Note: There is a lot of information in this lesson. Depending on the age and previous knowledge of my students, I have sometimes taught these concepts in two separate lessons.

Introduction:

1. Organize students so they can see both you and the videos
2. Introduce the idea of the brain. You can show the [anatomy video](#). Here is a [second brain anatomy video](#). The introductory portions of both these videos are a little annoying, so you might want to skip over the first few seconds.
3. **If your students are interested and able, this next video is an actual human brain that has just been removed during an autopsy. Make sure you warn your students and give them the opportunity to opt out of watching this.** [Unfixed human Brain](#).

Main Activity:

1. Our brains are like a filter, and your brain chooses what to pay attention to. There is an enormous amount of sensory information coming in through your whole body (skin, eyes, ears, mouth and nose). If our brains didn't filter out the information, you wouldn't be able to do anything other than pay attention to all of that sensory information. How does that work? [This video](#) clearly shows this concept.
2. When we understand our brains, we can use techniques to calm ourselves and feel more relaxed. The hand model of the brain is an excellent way to teach this. The two videos in the supporting literature section of this lesson ([How to Teach the Brain](#) and [Hand Model of the Brain for Kids](#)) which can be used to explain this to the students, or you can explain this using your own hands as a visual.
3. One reason we learn about the brain is so that we can learn how to calm ourselves. The best way to do this is to breathe. We will be learning more about that in future lessons, but as an introduction, [this is an excellent video](#). If you would like to make a glitter bottle, a link to the instructions is in the materials and resources section of the lesson.

Reflective Activity:

In the Courage Journal,

1. Think about a time when you experienced things differently than someone else. (you saw or heard things differently) Considering what you know about the brain and how it filters information, what do you think happened?
2. Using what you now know about the brain, how can you calm yourself when you are feeling anxious? Think about a time when you were anxious, and make a plan so that you can calm yourself when you feel this way.

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Extensions:

Creative Activity: Brain Hat. Found by clicking the “creative activity” button. You will find a link to a [website](#) where there are a few brain activities. Students can colour, cut out, and glue a printout of the brain, and wear it like a hat! There is also a “Brain Song” and links to other activities. Thanks to Ellen McHenry who gave us permission to use her materials.

Materials: (per student)

- Brain Hat sheet
- Pencil crayons
- Glue stick

Story Books: *A Walk in the Rain with a Brain* by Edward M. Hallowell, M.D.