

The Yes Brain

HOW TO CULTIVATE
COURAGE, CURIOSITY, AND
RESILIENCE IN YOUR CHILD

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Illustrations by Tuesday Mourning

CHAPTER 1

The Yes Brain: An Introduction

WHAT A YES BRAIN LOOKS LIKE



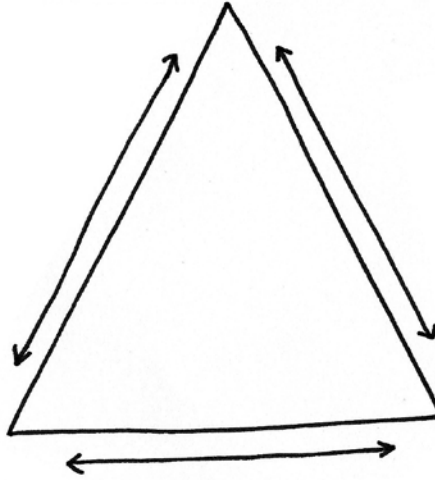
WHAT A NO BRAIN LOOKS LIKE



the TRIANGLE of WELL-BEING

RELATIONSHIPS

The sharing of energy
and information flow



MIND

The self-organizational regulation
of energy and information flow as
well as our consciousness and the
subjective feeling of being alive

BRAIN

The embodied
mechanism of energy
and information flow

The FACES of an Integrated Brain

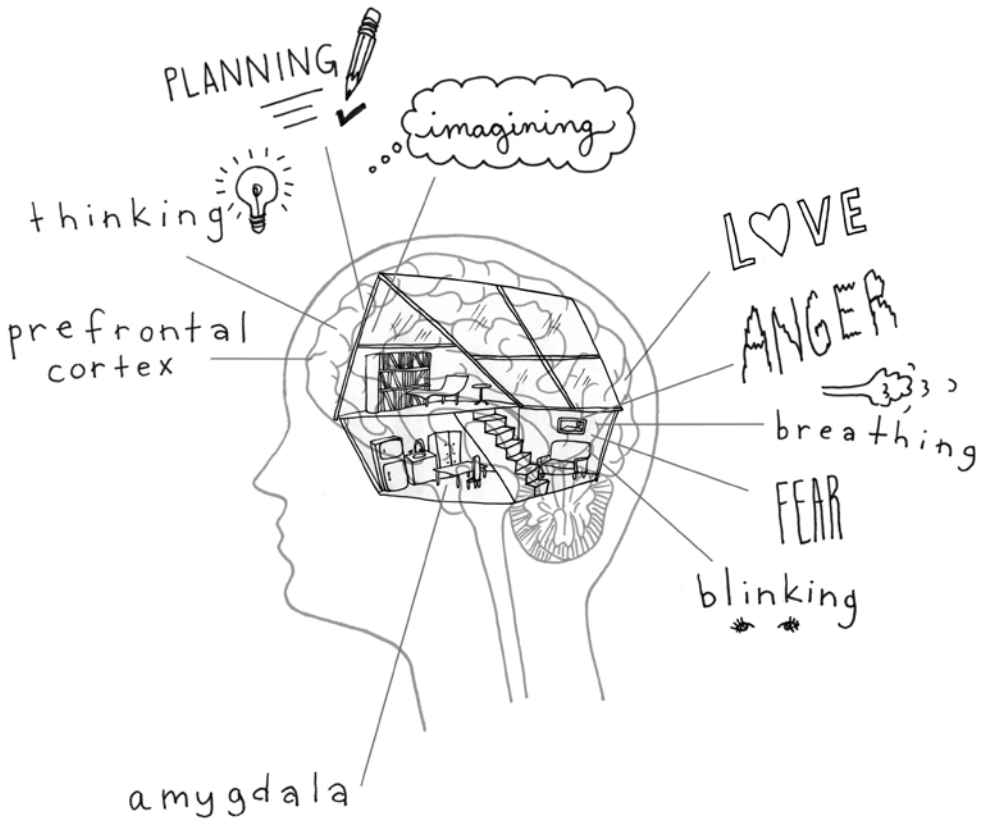
FLEXIBLE

ADAPTIVE

COHERENT

ENERGIZED

STABLE



The upstairs brain takes time to evolve as a child grows and matures. In fact, not until a person reaches his mid-twenties will the construction of the upstairs brain be complete.

Four Fundamentals of the Yes Brain:



CHAPTER 2

The Balanced Yes Brain

A No Brain response further frustrates a child



A Yes Brain response calms a child and helps build skills



A No Brain response increases the feelings of distress



A Yes Brain response focuses on his feelings and builds skills



Emotionally dismissive parenting leads to Minimizing



Criticizing/Shaming



Distancing



Sometimes we're so linked that we don't provide enough differentiation

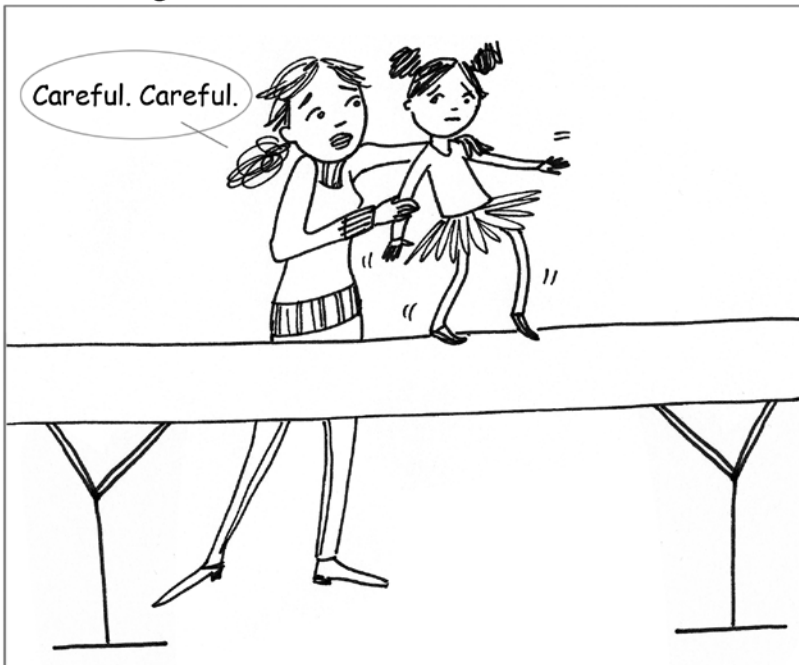


Avoid the extremes of the Integration Spectrum

Not enough linkage



Not enough differentiation

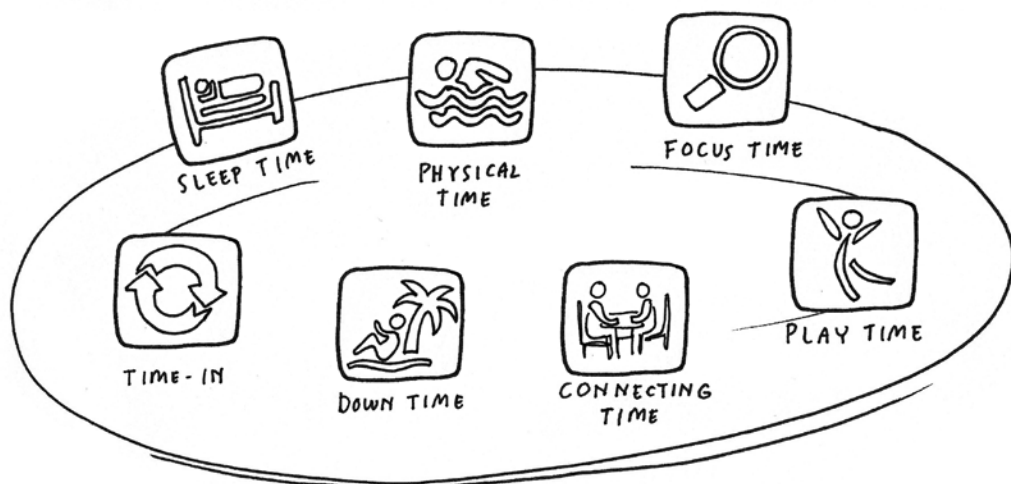


HOW MUCH SLEEP DO KIDS NEED?

AGES 4-12 mo.	⇒ 12 - 16 hrs.	(including naps)
1 - 2 yrs.	11 - 14	(including naps)
3 - 5 yrs.	10 - 13	(including naps)
6 - 12 yrs.	9 - 12	
13 - 18 yrs.	8 - 10	

* * * These are just recommendations. Every child is different, and each person's need for sleep varies.

THE HEALTHY MIND PLATTER



THE HEALTHY MIND PLATTER for OPTIMAL BRAIN MATTER

Based on the Healthy Mind Platter, copyright © 2011 David Rock and Daniel J. Siegel

Yes Brain Kids: Teach Your Kids About Balance

You know how you feel when it just seems like everything is going right and you handle yourself well? We call this being in the green zone.



But sometimes you get upset. You might get really mad, or maybe scared or nervous. You might want to cry or yell. This is what we call being in the red zone.



Or maybe when you get upset you pull away from everyone, wanting to be quiet and by yourself. Maybe your body feels limp, like a noodle. This is called going into the blue zone.



Here's a simple strategy you can use whenever you're upset and want to move back into the green. Just put one hand on your chest and one hand on your stomach. Try that now, and just sit there breathing, with a hand on your chest, and a hand on your stomach. See how calm you feel?



Now, tonight, when you're getting sleepy and your eyelids are getting heavy and your body is starting to feel relaxed, practice this trick again. Then each night, just before bed, practice it again, and notice how calm it makes you feel.



Olivia used this strategy when her friends at school didn't invite her to play with them. It hurt to be left out, and she felt herself entering the blue zone. She started to cry, and just wanted to disappear.

But she noticed the blue zone feelings and calmed herself by putting her hands over her heart and stomach. She felt better right away and moved back into the green zone. She still felt a little sad, but she knew she'd be okay.



The next time something makes you feel sad, or angry, or afraid, use this tool. With practice, you'll get to where you can use it at any time to help you move back into the green zone when you need to.



The Resilient Yes Brain

Instead of trying to extinguish bad behavior . . .



Build skills that lead to resilience and well-being



Instead of merely focusing on extinguishing the problem



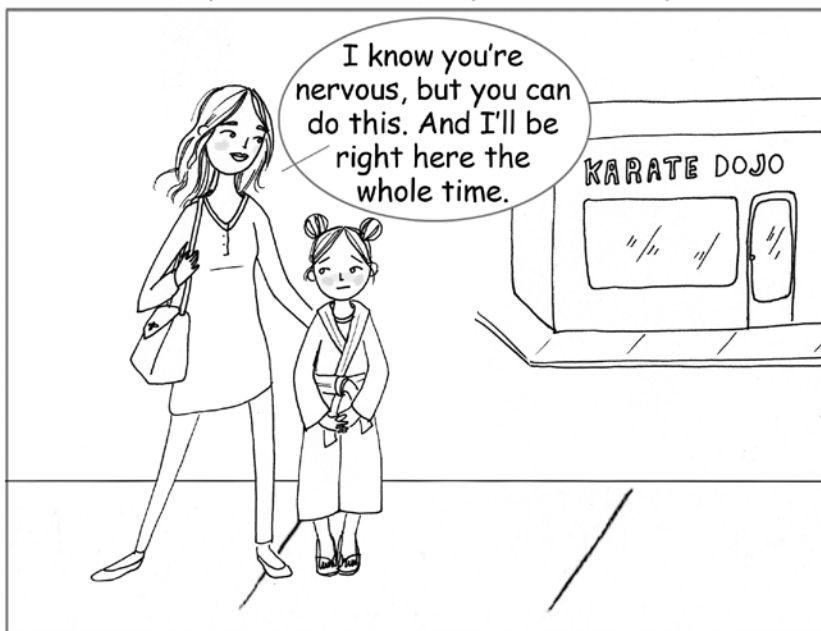
View behavior as communication and focus on building skills



Expand the Green Zone



Sometimes parents need to provide the pushin' . . .



And sometimes kids need more cushion



Shower Your Kids with the Four S's

Safe

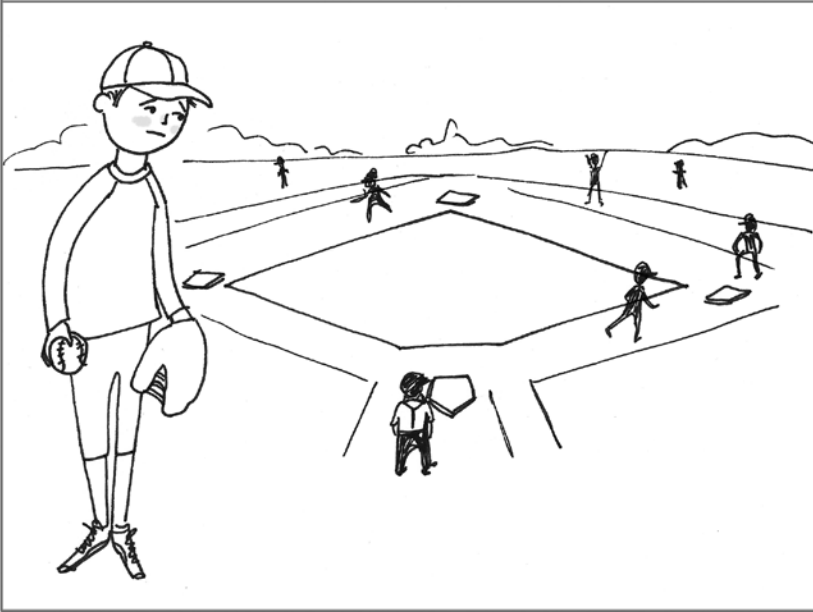
Seen

Soothed

Secure

Yes Brain Kids: Teach Your Kids About Resilience

Derek wanted to play Little League, but he was afraid.



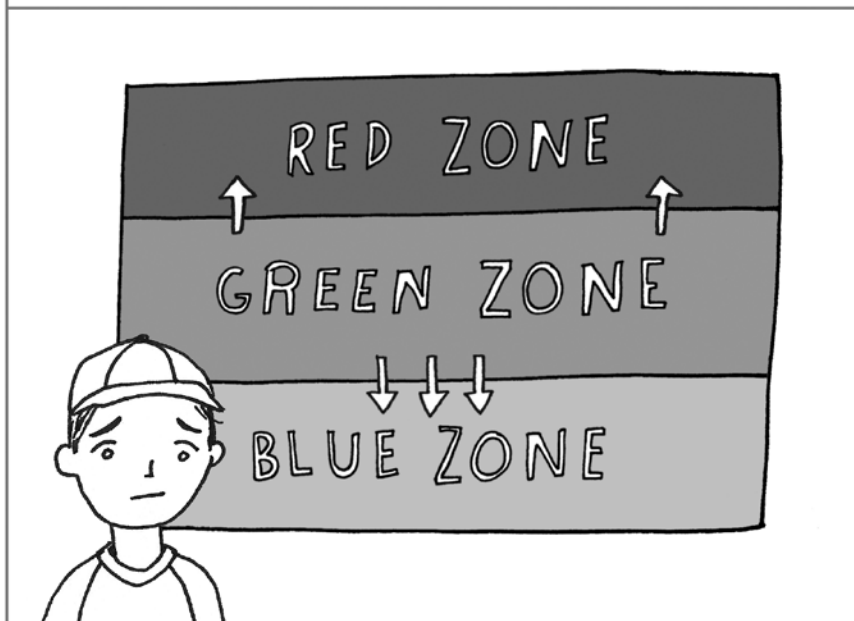
His parents encouraged him, though. They even went with him to the first practice, and his mom volunteered to help coach the team.



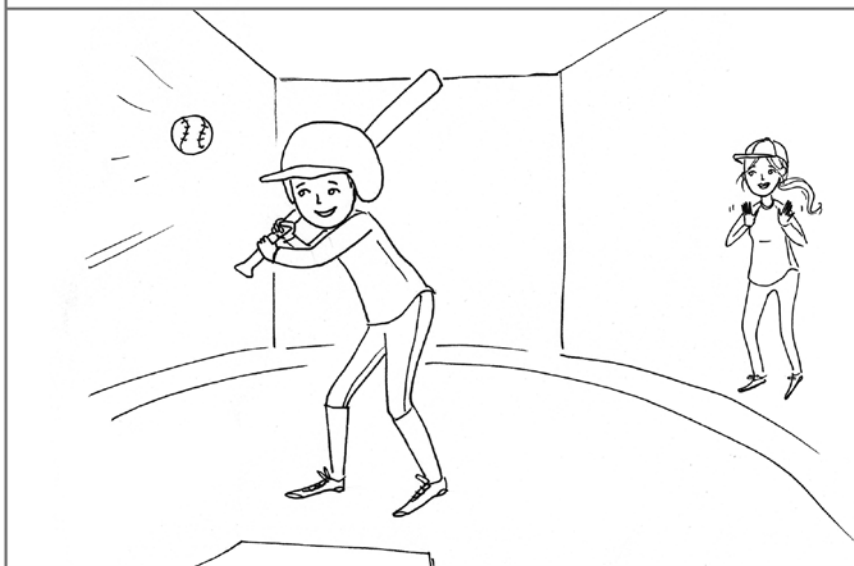
The first practice he didn't love it, but the second practice was pretty fun. Then, in his first game he got a hit, and it turned out he had a blast. Now he loves baseball. And he wouldn't have known that if he hadn't been willing to confront his fear and try something new.



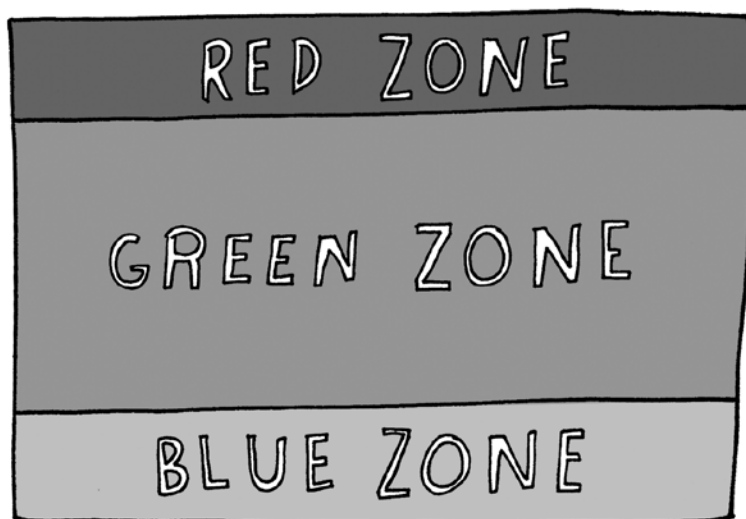
Do you ever feel nervous like Derek did about playing baseball? Do you ever feel pulled a little bit into the red zone, or maybe into the blue?



It's not easy to be brave, especially when you feel yourself outside the green zone. But sometimes, when you try something new, you find out you can do more than you realize.



It feels really great to be brave when something is hard. Plus, it will make your green zone even bigger, and you won't miss out on new experiences you might really enjoy! You learn that you can do hard things, and that feeling uncomfortable or afraid is okay and that you can do it anyway!



The Insightful Yes Brain

The spectator offers perspective



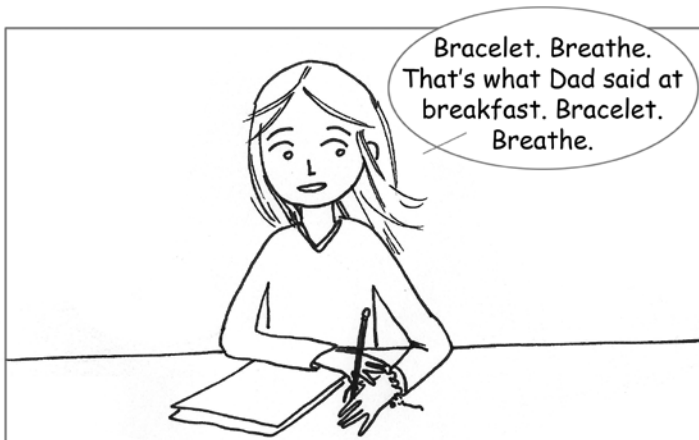
The Genesis of a Meltdown

STIMULUS → ~~IMMEDIATE REACTION~~ → MELTDOWN

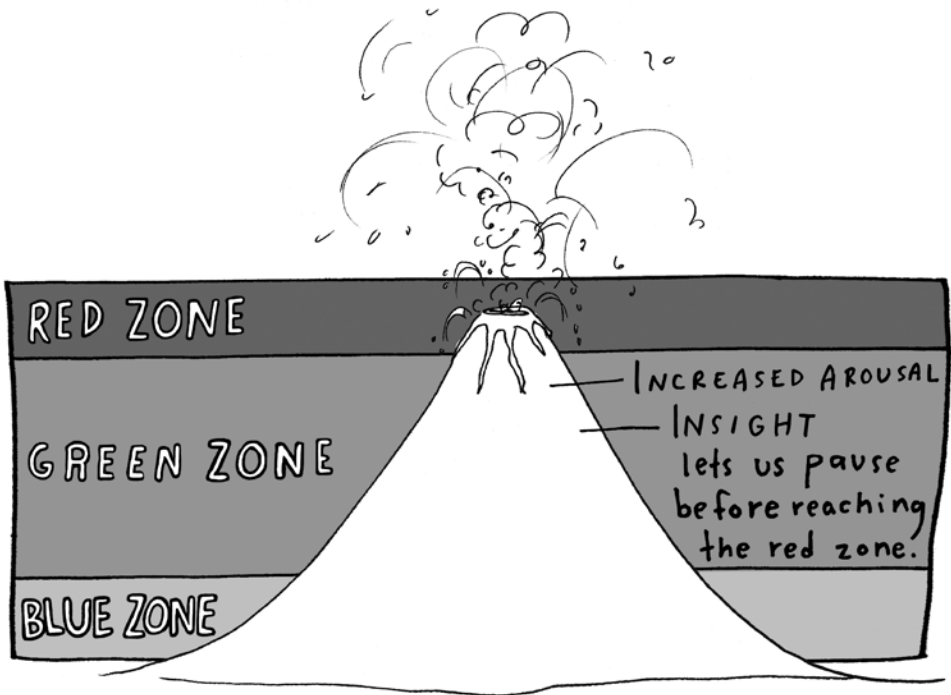


STIMULUS → ~~IMMEDIATE REACTION~~ → MELTDOWN

PAUSE → BALANCE → SOUND DECISION-MAKING

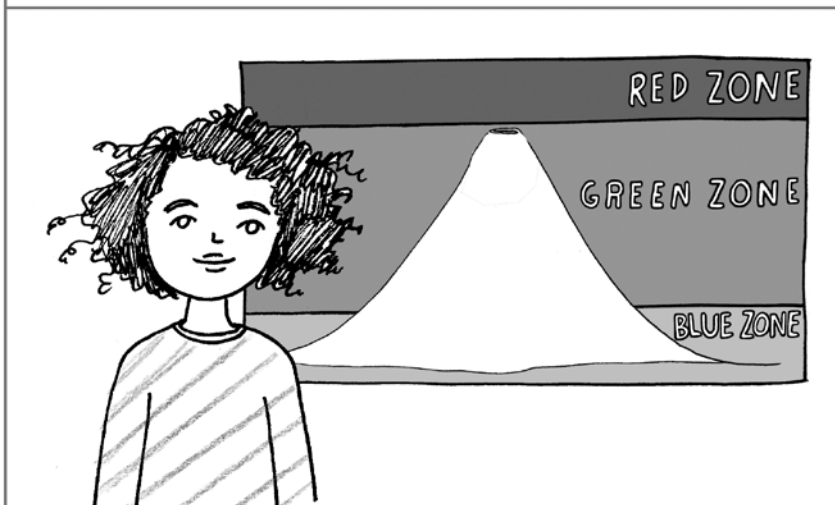


The Red Volcano



Yes Brain Kids: Teach Your Kids About Insight

Let's talk about your feelings again, and focus on the red zone and what you can do to avoid going into the red zone in the first place. Think about your feelings as a volcano. As long as you're down low on the mountain, you're in the green zone. You feel peaceful and calm.



But when your feelings start getting really big and you get upset, you start up the mountain, toward the red zone. And guess what happens when you reach the top? You erupt!



That might mean yelling at someone, throwing an object, tearing something up, or just totally losing control.

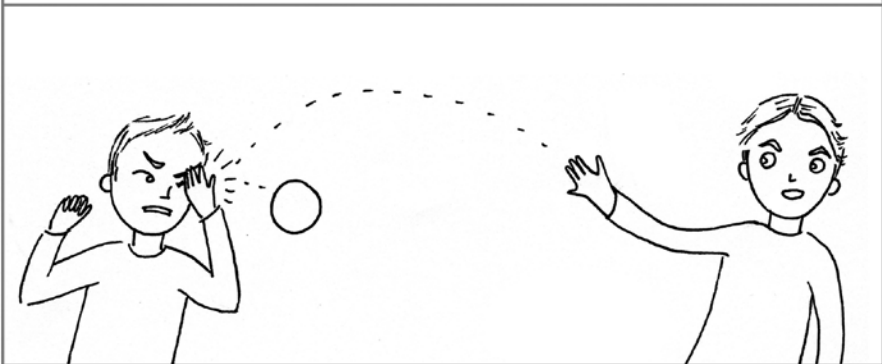


There's nothing wrong with getting upset. But what if we could keep from reaching the top of the red volcano? What if we could catch ourselves when we began to get upset, and not ever erupt? Wouldn't it be better if we just paused and took a breath?



INSIGHT
lets us pause
before reaching
the red zone.

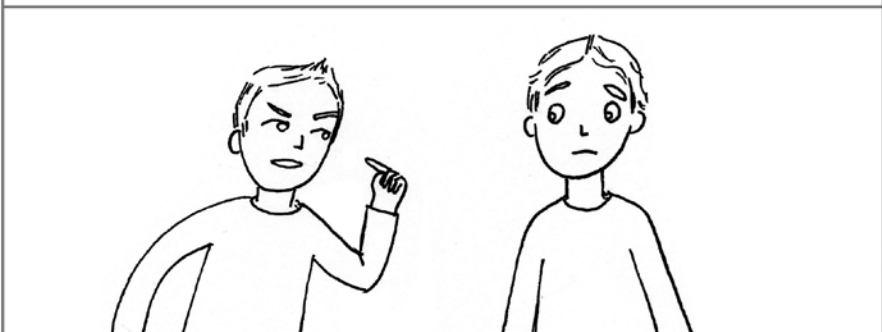
This is what happened with Brody. His brother, Kyle, threw a ball that hit him in the eye, and Brody was so mad! He wanted to throw something at Kyle, or say something really mean to get back at him.



But instead he paused and took a deep breath. This is the key. He thought about the red volcano, and he made himself pause. He was still furious—just as mad as before. But he didn't act on those feelings.



That's all you have to do when you feel yourself moving into the red zone: just pause. You don't have to stop being upset. Just pause before erupting. Then you can take a moment and think of a different response, like asking your parents for help, or telling someone how you feel.



The Empathic Yes Brain

Behavior Is Communication

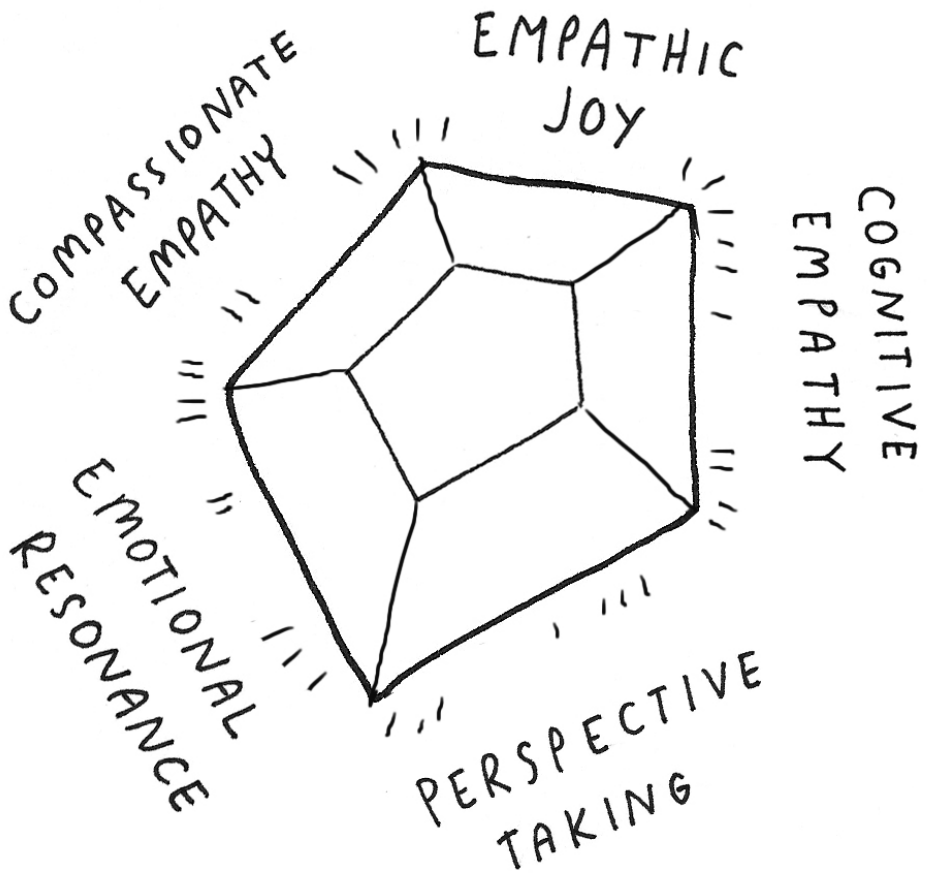
The behavior we see:



What's really being communicated:



The Empathy Diamond



We want to **SNAG** a child's brain in the area of empathy.

Stimulate
Neuronal
Activation and
Growth

Empathy is a Yes Brain skill, and a caring brain can be built



Engage the Empathy Radar

Instead of judging . . .



Teach kids to use their curiosity



Teach kids that blaming and criticizing . . .



Causes more problems than "speaking from the I"



Teach kids that giving advice . . .



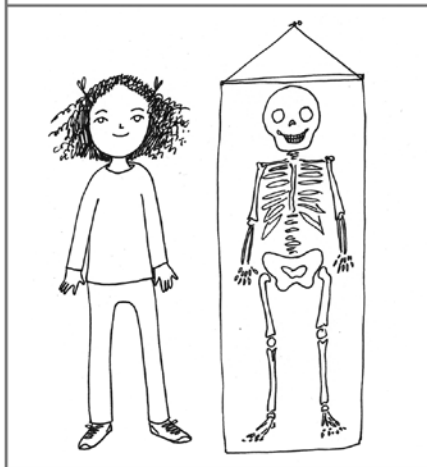
Isn't as powerful as listening and being present



Yes Brain Kids: Teach Your Kids About Empathy:

In the other "Yes Brain Kids" sections we've talked a lot about paying attention to your own reactions, and what's going inside you. Now we want to talk about seeing what's going on inside someone else.

When you look at a friend, you can see what she looks like on the outside. And if you have an X-ray, you can see the inside of her body.



But did you know you can look at someone with your heart, too? That happens when you notice how that person is feeling, like whether she's happy, or sad, or angry, or excited.



When you use your heart to look at someone, you pay attention to his face, but also his body. Can you tell how this boy feels, just from looking at his body language?



That's Carter. And if you said he looks sad, you're right. He's sad because a bigger boy at school was mean to him and pushed him down.



Carter never told Lottie he was sad, but when she looked with her heart, she could tell. She could see her brother's feelings, and her heart hurt.

Since she had looked at her brother with her heart, Lottie knew she needed to check on him. She asked about his feelings, and the two kids decided to ask their mom for advice about the bully.



The next time someone around you is hurting, look with your heart. Pay attention to what that person is feeling. If you can just notice what's going on inside that other person, you'll probably know just what to do.



REFRIGERATOR SHEET

The Yes Brain

By Daniel J. Siegel and Tina Payne Bryson

• Yes Brain

- ⑩ Flexible, curious, resilient, willing to try new things and even make mistakes.
- ⑩ Open to the world and relationships, helping us relate to others and understand ourselves.
- ⑩ Develops an internal compass and leads to true success because it prioritizes the *inner* world of a child and looks for ways to challenge the child's whole brain to reach its potential.

• No Brain

- ⑩ Reactive and fearful, rigid and shut-down, worrying that it might make a mistake.
- ⑩ Tends to focus on external achievement and goals, not on internal effort and exploration.
- ⑩ Might lead to gold stars and external success, but does so by rigidly adhering to convention and the status quo and becoming good at pleasing others, to the detriment of curiosity and joy.

The Four Fundamentals of the Yes Brain

• **Balance: a skill to be learned that creates emotional stability and regulation of the body and brain**

- ⑩ Leads to the *green zone*, where kids feel calm and in control of their bodies and decisions.
- ⑩ When kids are upset they may leave the green zone and enter the revved-up, chaotic red zone, or the shut-down, rigid blue zone.
- ⑩ Parents can create balance by finding the “integration sweet spot.” Balance comes from being appropriately differentiated and linked.
- ⑩ *Balance Strategy #1:* Maximize the ZZZ's—provide enough sleep.
- ⑩ *Balance Strategy #2:* Serve a Healthy Mind Platter—balance the family's schedule.

- **Resilience: a state of resourcefulness that lets us move through challenges with strength and clarity**

- ⑩ Short-term goal: Balance (getting back in the green zone). Long-term goal: Resilience (expanding the green zone). Both goals lead to the ability to bounce back from adversity.
- ⑩ Behavior is communication, so instead of focusing solely on extinguishing problematic behavior, listen to the message, then build skills.
- ⑩ Sometimes kids need pushin', and sometimes they need cushion.
- ⑩ *Resilience Strategy #1*: Shower your kids with the four S's—help them feel safe, seen, soothed, and secure.
- ⑩ *Resilience Strategy #2*: Teach mindsight skills—show kids how to shift their perspectives so they are not victims to their emotions and circumstances.

- **Insight: the ability to look within and understand ourselves, then use what we learn to make good decisions and be more in control of our lives**

- ⑩ The observer and the observed: be the spectator observing the player on the field.
- ⑩ The power is in the pause that lets us *choose* how we respond to a situation.
- ⑩ *Insight Strategy #1*: Reframe pain—ask kids, “Which struggle do you prefer?”
- ⑩ *Insight Strategy #2*: Avoid the Red Volcano eruption—teach kids to pause *before* erupting.

- **Empathy: the perspective that allows us to keep in mind that each of us is not only a “me,” but part of an interconnected “we” as well**

- ⑩ Like the other skills, empathy can be learned through daily interactions and experiences.
- ⑩ It's about understanding the perspective of another, as well as caring enough to take action to make things better.
- ⑩ *Empathy Strategy #1*: Fine-tune the “empathy radar”—activate the social engagement system.
- ⑩ *Empathy Strategy #2*: Establish a language of empathy—provide a vocabulary that communicates care.
- ⑩ *Empathy Strategy #3*: Expand the circle of concern—increase kids' awareness of people outside their most intimate connections.