

.....THE HAND BRAIN MODEL.....

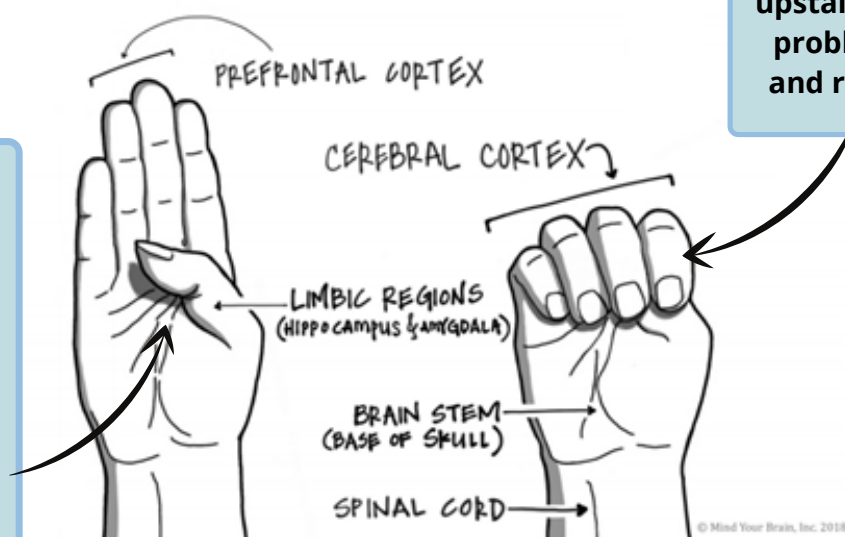
(DAN SIEGAL)

When we become very upset, anxious, or angry it can be very difficult to process what someone is saying to us, understand our emotions, and think clearly. When this happens we have 'flipped our lid'!

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN WE 'FLIP OUR LID'?

A simple way of explaining what happens when we 'flip our lid' is through the Hand Brain Model by Dan Siegal. We are going to demonstrate Dan Siegal's hand brain model to help you recognise what is happening to your child's brain (and yours too) when they are dysregulated (i.e. very upset, angry, or anxious). You can use this model to help your child understand what is going on in their brain during these moments.

Hand Model of the Brain



Here, your thumb represents the limbic regions which has also been called our **'downstairs brain'**. This part of our brain is the emotional part and is in charge of our **big feelings**. It really cares about **protecting us and keeping us safe**.

The fingers covering our thumb represents the cerebral cortex, or our **'upstairs brain'**, where our **problem solving, logic and reasoning occurs**.

Here are some YouTube clips that may be useful for you to watch about this model.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5CpRY9-MIHA&t=72s>

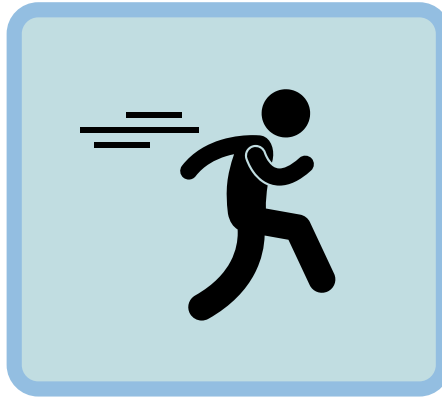
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FTnCMxEnnv8>

This document is available in Welsh / Mae'r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg

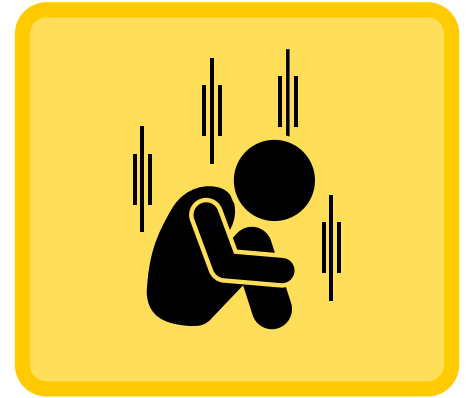
When these two parts work together, we can think and act logically and calmly. However, when we become dysregulated and our 'lid flips' (fingers uncover the thumb), the 'downstairs brain' regions are working alone and acting on pure emotions to protect and keep us safe. Without the 'upstairs brain' helping to make good decisions or problem solve, the 'downstairs brain' moves quickly into the protective fight, flight or freeze modes.



Throw something or lash out (**fight**)



Run away (**flight**)



Become unresponsive to questions or demands (**freeze**)

Some children 'flip their lid' multiple times throughout the day, and some may be able to hold on during day (e.g. in school) but then 'flip their lid' when they get home. The triggers for your child 'flipping their lid' may be obvious e.g. new situations, loud noises, or they could be something that isn't so obvious e.g. smell, a memory etc.

WHAT TO DO IN THE MOMENT?

- 1.The first step is to reflect on how you are feeling. It can be easy in these moments to become dysregulated (upset) ourselves. We are all human and 'flipped lid' behaviours can be very challenging.
- 2.Take a moment to regulate and calm yourself. Look at the regulation strategies for tips on how to do this and ensure your 'lid is on' so that you can respond calmly.
- 3.You might need to take some time for yourself, and that is ok. If you are unable to walk away from the situation, due to your child needing you to keep them safe, you can verbalise your feelings e.g. 'I am feeling very overwhelmed, so I am going to take some deep breaths to help me calm down.' You can ask them to do this with you.
- 4.By responding calmly in these situations you will be modelling the behaviour to your child. During this time the tone of your voice is very important. Children can become more dysregulated when adults use aggressive or loud tones. A calm, sing-song voice that matches their intensity will help you to slowly bring them down to your calmness level.
- 5.Use PACE (go to PACE resource for examples).