



CALMING THE BRAIN

Emotional Regulation

A GUIDE FOR PARENTS AND
EDUCATORS OF TWEENS
AND TEENS

strongerwithin.org

HELLO!!!

Welcome, parents and educators!

This ebook is designed to assist you in helping your tween or teenager regulate their emotions. With the various challenges and stressors that come with adolescence, it can be difficult for young people to manage their feelings.

This ebook looks at what happens to our brains when overwhelmed and shares some practical tools and tips that can be used at home or in the classroom to support emotional regulation.

By working together, we can help our young people thrive and develop strong emotional intelligence skills to serve them well throughout their lives.

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WELCOME

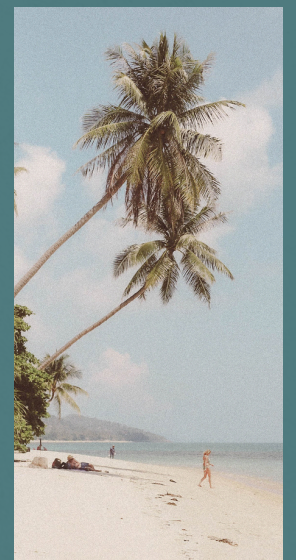
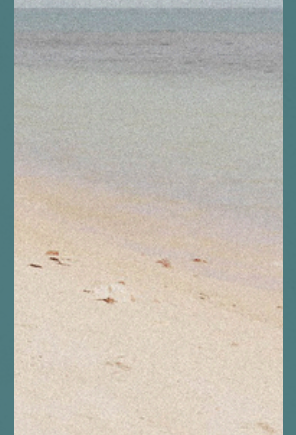
HOW THE BRAIN WORKS

Here is a simplified explanation of what happens to our brains when stressed or overwhelmed.

Let's focus on two main parts:

1. The Amygdala - Detects stress and triggers our fight or flight response.
2. The Pre Frontal Cortex - Helps us to make calm and rational decisions.

When we are stressed and overwhelmed, the amygdala is in control, and often, access to the frontal cortex is limited, making it difficult to make rational decisions and regulate our emotions.



EMOTIONAL RESPONSES

The link between the prefrontal cortex and the amygdala is believed to be critical for regulating emotion.

The amygdala detects stress and releases hormones like adrenaline and cortisol into our body when triggered to prepare our body for action. Our breathing can become shallow, our hearts beat faster, and we may get sweaty palms. Our flight or fight response kicks in. This is great if there is a fire but not so much if there is no real danger.

In these moments, our active amygdala shuts down the neural pathway to our prefrontal cortex (the part that helps us use rationality and problem-solve), so complex decision-making disappears, our attention narrows, and we are less likely to see multiple perspectives.

We often focus on what makes us feel safe: "I'm right, and you're wrong", even though we usually can see various perspectives. Sound familiar to any parent or adult trying to reason with an emotional teenager?

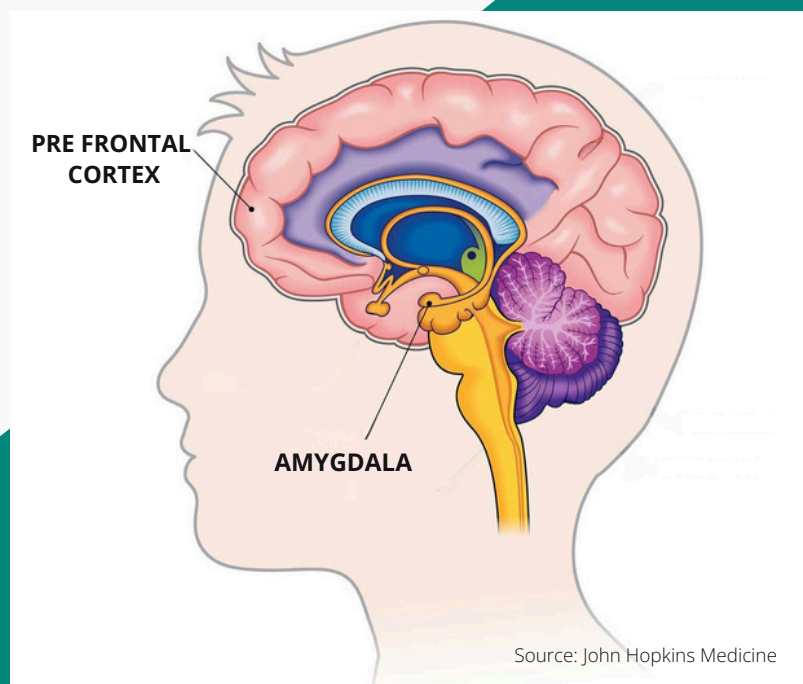


BRAIN FUNCTIONING

Let's look at the diagram below.

This is a picture of the brain and our Amygdala and Prefrontal Cortex. Unfortunately, the prefrontal cortex is not fully developed until our mid to late 20s, so we need some extra grace for our young people regarding decision-making and emotional regulation.

The good news is teenagers and adults can still use the same strategies to calm their brains and engage in calmer, more rational decision-making. Talk with your young person when they are relaxed and share some of the following techniques so they are familiar with them when they become stressed.



FIVE WAYS TO CALM THE BRAIN

01

BREATHE

A QUICK AND EASY WAY TO CALM THE BRAIN AND ENGAGE THE PREFRONTAL CORTEX IS TO FOCUS ON DEEP BREATHING AND RESTORE THEIR OXYGEN BALANCE. SEE THE NEXT PAGE FOR SOME BREATHING TECHNIQUES THAT MAY HELP.

02

MUSCLE RELAXATION – BODY SCAN

A BODY SCAN IS A GREAT GROUNDING TECHNIQUE. START WITH THE TOES AND MOVE UP THE BODY. CLENCH, HOLD AND RELEASE ONE PART OF THE BODY AT A TIME.

03

COUNTING BACKWARDS

A SUPER EASY TOOL IS ASKING YOUR YOUNG PERSON TO COUNT BACKWARDS FROM 10. IT HELPS THEM TO FOCUS ON THE MOMENT AND CALM THEIR THOUGHTS. HINT: SHARE THIS TECHNIQUE WITH THEM IN A CALMER MOMENT FIRST.

04

EXERCISE

VIGOROUS EXERCISE IS A GREAT WAY TO RELEASE BUILT-UP STRESS AND RELAX THE BODY. IF THEY ONLY HAVE A MOMENT, ENCOURAGE THEM TO RUN INTENSELY ON THE SPOT FOR 10 SECONDS AND RELEASE. OTHERWISE, GO OUTSIDE FOR A RUN, BIKE RIDE OR SWIM.

05

TAKE A BRAIN BREAK

ONE WAY TO STOP A LOOP OF STRESS AND FRUSTRATION IS TO TAKE A MOMENT TO THINK ABOUT SOMETHING ELSE. ASK THEM TO CLOSE THEIR EYES AND FOCUS FOR FIVE MINUTES ON A HOLIDAY DESTINATION OR HOW THEY WOULD SPEND \$1,000. THEN, THEY CAN REFOCUS ON THE PROBLEM AT HAND.

TECHNIQUES

BREATHING

BELLY BREATHING

PLACE ONE HAND ON YOUR BELLY AND ONE HAND ON YOUR CHEST. TAKE A DEEP BREATH IN FOR FOUR COUNTS AND THEN EXHALE SLOWLY (THROUGH YOUR NOSE) FOR FOUR COUNTS. PAY ATTENTION TO THE RISE AND FALL OF YOUR CHEST AND BELLY AS YOU COMPLETE THE EXERCISE.

FLOWERS - CANDLE

STAND UP STRAIGHT AND PRETEND THAT YOU ARE HOLDING A BUNCH OF FLOWERS. TAKE A DEEP BREATH FILLING YOUR LUNGS WITH THE FRAGRANCE OF THE FLOWERS. PLACE THE FLOWERS DOWN AND PICK UP A PRETEND CANDLE. NOW EXHALE DEEPLY AND BLOW OUT THE CANDLE'S FLAME.

SQUARE BREATHING

DRAW A SQUARE IN THE AIR OR ON THE WALL WITH YOUR FINGER. FOR EACH SIDE OF THE SQUARE - COUNT TO FOUR. SIDE 1: BREATHE IN FOR FOUR, SIDE 2 -HOLD FOR FOUR, SIDE 3- EXHALE FOR FOUR AND SIDE 4- HOLD FOR FOUR. REPEAT THIS THREE TIMES.

PROCESSING OUR

EMOTIONS



ONCE THEY HAVE CALMED DOWN, THEY CAN PROCESS THE EMOTION AND DECIDE ON AN APPROPRIATE RESPONSE.

HERE ARE SOME QUESTIONS WE CAN ENCOURAGE OUR YOUNG PEOPLE TO ASK THEMSELVES:

WHAT IS THE EMOTION?

DOES THE LEVEL OF REACTION FIT THE SITUATION?

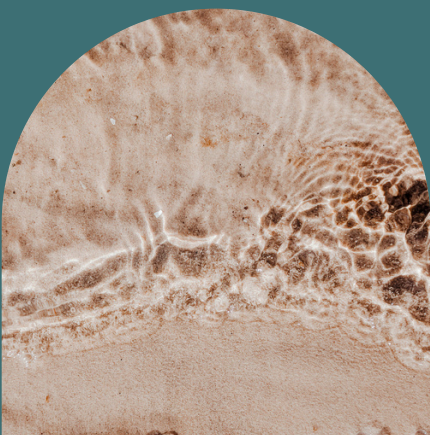
IS THIS FEELING LYING TO ME OR TELLING ME THE TRUTH?

WOULD I REACT LIKE THIS IF SOMEONE ELSE WAS INVOLVED INSTEAD?

IS MY REACTION AT A LEVEL THAT I CAN MANAGE IT?

WHO CAN I ASK FOR HELP?

IF I WERE CALMER, HOW WOULD I HAVE HANDLED THE SITUATION?





JUST THE BEGINNING

EMOTIONAL REGULATION

We can reflect on whether the presenting emotion is the core emotion and if the strength of the emotion fits the situation. We can encourage them to look at their thoughts, how this affects their feelings and actions and how to reframe negative thoughts and self-talk. This can significantly impact the strength of emotion and their ability to self-regulate.

There are a variety of tools they can use to manage and regulate emotions. Equipping young people with these skills can dramatically impact how well they navigate the challenges they face through the tween and teenage years. If you want to learn more about these tools or services we offer, visit www.strongerwithin.org.



Here to Help

I want to commend you on taking the time to invest in your young person. In all my social work experience over the past two decades, I have worked with many young people and families facing many challenges. The ones who have the most success are the ones who have an adult in their corner cheering them on, having their back and helping them where they can.

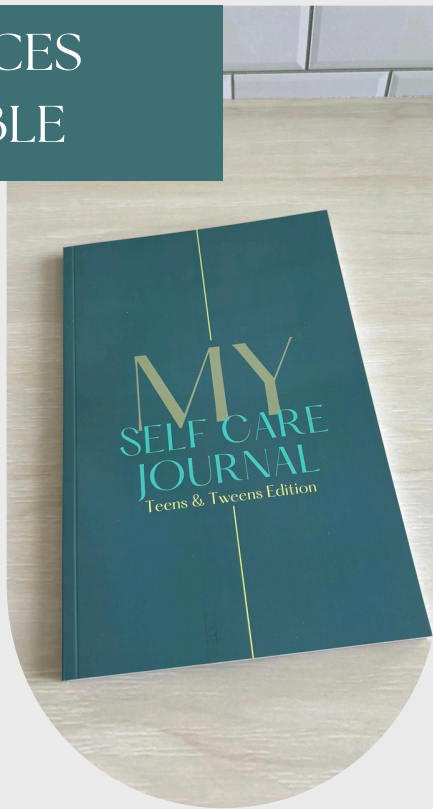
In 2019 I founded Stronger Within after noticing a lack of accessible resources to support my kids and their friends as they entered the tween and teen years.

Today, Stronger Within offers interactive workshops, online courses, one-on-one sessions, and resources to help families and educators raise confident, resilient tweens and teens.

We'd love to share this journey with you! Visit us at www.strongerwithin.org for more resources and support to navigate the adolescent years successfully.

Racheal

RESOURCES
AVAILABLE



JOURNAL

This beautiful nine week guided Self-Care Journal for girls aged 10-16 will strengthen self-esteem, build resilience, and encourage a positive mindset!

[CLICK TO SHOP](#)

Anxiety Truth Cards

A effective way to manage anxiety and reframe negative thinking.



Breathing Cards

A great tool to regulate emotions, calm down easily and reduce stress.



Affirmation Cards

CBT-based tool to boost self-esteem and positive self-talk in girls and boys.



[CLICK FOR MORE](#)

MOTHER - DAUGHTER ONLINE COURSE



FRIENDSHIPS

Our Special Qualities and Friendships Course is a 40-60 minute self-paced experience for mothers and daughters (ages 9-12) to boost self-esteem, build healthy friendships, and strengthen their bond.

[CLICK TO FIND OUT
MORE](#)

ONLINE SESSIONS

These online individual or small group sessions are a great way to address social and emotional wellbeing challenges and support families to grow resilient and confident tweens and teens.



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