



NEURO NUGGET NEWS

Focusing on Learning About Your Brain to “Hack” Behavior

When Big Emotions Take Over

Over the past two months, we’ve learned that the brain’s primary job is safety and that behavior is often connected to brain state.



When children enter survival mode, access to the thinking brain decreases. In these moments, learning and accountability become more difficult — not because expectations don’t matter, but because the brain is overwhelmed.



This month, we focus on what helps the brain return to thinking mode — and how we can make that process understandable for children.

Regulation Comes Before Learning



When a child is dysregulated, the amygdala (alarm system) is highly active, and the prefrontal cortex (thinking brain) is less accessible. This is why reasoning, lecturing, or consequences often feel ineffective during emotional moments. Before teaching can occur, the nervous system must settle.

Helpful adult responses include:

- Calm tone and steady body language
- Fewer words and clear direction
- Predictability and reassurance
- Brief movement or reset breaks
- Sitting nearby without escalating

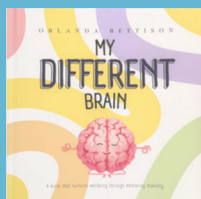
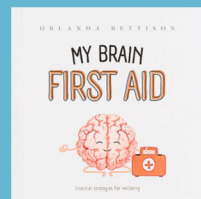
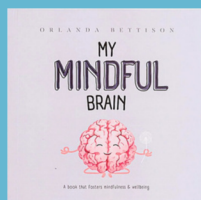
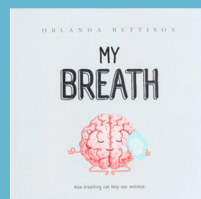
These supports send signals of safety to the brain, allowing access to thinking to gradually return.





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A Practical Tool: Introducing BrainWise

One tool I have created to support caregivers and educators in this work is BrainWise. BrainWise is based on the series *My Brain is a Home* by Orlanda Bettison and was developed as a practical, accessible way to help adults and children better understand how the brain works. While concepts like the amygdala and prefrontal cortex are helpful for adults, they can feel abstract for children. BrainWise translates these ideas into simple, relatable language and visuals that children can connect with and remember.

Through this approach, children begin to understand:

- Why their brain shifts into protection mode
- How their “alarm system” can become loud
- What helps their thinking brain come back online
- How to reflect and take responsibility once they are calm

BrainWise is designed to be used across both home and school settings, creating consistency for children as they learn how their brain works. It provides caregivers and educators with shared language that moves beyond general phrases like “calm down” and instead supports awareness and skill-building. For example, instead of saying: “Calm down,” we can say: “It sounds like your guard dog is barking really loud right now. Let’s help it settle.” This small shift helps children better understand what is happening in their brain and gives them tools to respond differently over time.

To further support caregivers and educators, I have created an online resource hub connected to the BrainWise series. To learn more and access the Parent & Educator resources, visit: <https://www.projectfrontier.org/brain-wise-library>



Key Message to Carry Forward

Shared language + regulation = stronger learning. When children understand their brains, and adults respond in brain-aligned ways, behavior change then becomes more sustainable.



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