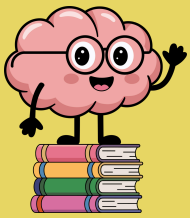
Neuro Nugget News

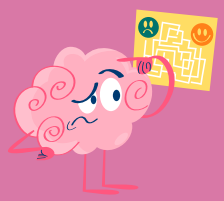
Focusing on learning about your brain to “hack” behavior

Welcome Back, Neuro Nugget!



After taking a summer break, *Neuro Nugget News* is back! Over our first five issues, we built a foundation for understanding how the brain influences behavior. We explored the basic parts of the brain, the difference between the Thinking Brain and Survival Brain, the importance of regulation, and how accountability and consistency can help children learn and grow.

As we begin a new school year, it is a great time to bring those ideas back to the forefront. A new school year means new routines, new expectations, new classrooms, new relationships, and sometimes a whole lot of change. For some children, these changes are exciting. For others, they can create stress that we may not immediately recognize.



A New Year = A Lot for the Brain

Even positive changes require the brain to adjust. A child may be learning a new schedule, navigating a different classroom, meeting new teachers or classmates, adjusting to different expectations, or simply getting used to being “back in the groove.”

When there is a lot of change happening at once, the brain has to work harder to process information and determine what is expected. This can sometimes show up as irritability, forgetfulness, difficulty following directions, emotional outbursts, avoidance, or simply being more tired than usual. It can be easy to look at these behaviors and think, “They should know better.” Instead, try asking, “Is their brain still adjusting?”

Sometimes what looks like a behavior problem is actually a brain that is working hard to adapt.

Remember the Brain Basics

As we head into a new year, remember the simple framework we built together:

- The brain seeks safety.
- The Survival Brain protects.
- The Thinking Brain learns.
- Regulation creates access to learning.
- Accountability teaches responsibility.
- Consistency builds trust and skills

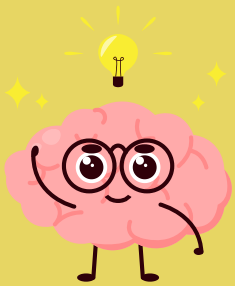
These ideas do not mean lowering expectations. In fact, they help us hold expectations in a way that gives children a better opportunity to meet them. A child may need support getting regulated before they can follow a direction. They may need a reminder of a routine before they can be expected to manage it independently. They may need an opportunity to calm down before they can meaningfully reflect on a poor choice.

The goal is not to remove the expectation. The goal is to help the brain become ready to meet it.

Neuro Nugget News

Focusing on learning about your brain to “hack” behavior - p.2

A September Brain Hack



Try making the next few weeks as predictable as possible. Talk about routines before they happen. Give reminders when transitions are coming. Use the same language consistently. When something changes, explain what is happening and what the child can expect next.

You can even make brain-based language part of your everyday conversations:

- “Your brain is learning a new routine.”
- “That was a big change. Let's give your brain a minute to adjust.”
- “Is your Thinking Brain ready to work, or does your brain need a reset first?”

The more we use this language when children are calm, the easier it becomes to use it when they are struggling.

A Quick Reminder for Caregivers & Educators

The beginning of a new school year is not just a time for children to learn new academic content. Their brains are also learning routines, relationships, expectations, environments, and how to navigate a new year.

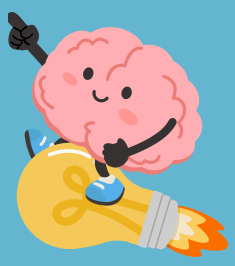
- Give the brain time to adjust.
- Be consistent.
- Keep expectations clear.
- And remember that supporting regulation does not mean letting go of accountability.



Sometimes the best “behavior hack” is simply understanding what the brain needs in order to be successful.

Looking Ahead

This fall, *Neuro Nugget News* will continue moving beyond the basics and take a closer look at how brain science can help us understand everyday behavior. We’ll explore what happens when stress builds, how triggers affect the brain, how habits are formed, and how adults can help children build stronger skills over time.



We’re glad to be back!

@projectfrontiernkesc www.projectfrontier.org projectfrontier@nkesc.org