



Issue 60

## Crab Mentality: A Teaching Example for BrainWise

As counselors, educators, and health providers, we see how youth with promise can be derailed by subtle and not-so-subtle pressure from their Constellation of Support. Family members and friends normally



**Crabs in a Pot Mentality**

considered to be "double lines" can become broken lines when they are threatened by an individual's success. Fueled by fears of change, loss, or jealousy, they will make sure that "If I can't have it, neither can you." This behavior is called Crab Mentality.

Crabs stick together in groups as a survival instinct. This "Lizard Brain" reaction is ingrained; when crabs are put in a bucket and one tries to climb out, the others will pull it back. If the crab continues to try

to escape, the other crabs will kill it.

BrainWise instructor and trainer Maile Monk, Ph.D., uses this metaphor to help students discuss how the different Wise Ways can help them navigate the pressures they face, especially when a trusted friend or family member is unhelpful. These situations can be complex, and many thinking tools are needed to make choices that will have lasting positive consequences for the student and others.



**Maile Monk, PhD,  
School Psychologist**

Students can assess problems by using a BrainWise [checklist of the 10 Wise Ways](#) or [problem solving worksheet](#) until they hone their skills. With practice, they learn how to Stop and Think about the best way to navigate the emotional minefield around family and friends' behaviors.

The Wise Ways help us stay off our Emotions Elevators so we can think about the consequences of our choices, consider the points of view of others as we assertively communicate our goals and reaffirm or revise our own point of view.

The Crab Mentality is also an example of how individuals who are frequently the "double lines" in our Constellation of Support may hinder -knowingly or unwittingly -- our success.

Maile's creation of a teaching lesson from a YouTube video on crab mentality is a creative example of how to reinforce the 10 Wise Ways using popular media. Here's a [link to Maile's work](#) introducing BrainWise to her school district, and another [link to the video](#) she uses for her lesson.

Maile introduced me to the words "crab mentality" and made me think about how it describes behavior that has kept success out of the reach of many individuals. Youth who are the first generation to graduate from high school often face opposition when they want to go to college.

Children who excel in school can be bullied and shamed by peers and family, as can someone who does well in a job. BrainWise skills help in these situations. When emotions are high, knowing how to stay off the Emotions Elevator and remain in control leads to wise choices and positive consequences.

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## Black History Month and BrainWise



February is designated Black History Month to improve awareness and knowledge of historical incidents in the lives on Black Americans.

[BrainWise instructors](#) teach history lessons using stories and games

integrated with the 10 Wise Ways. As more Black history is expounded by Black Americans themselves, deniers may attempt to distort facts. BrainWise gives parents and teachers tools to assess information fairly and accurately. This is an ongoing process. The month is an opportunity to set an example to learn facts and hold conversations on race.

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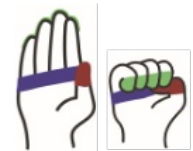
## **BrainWise Chapter in Inhibitory Control passes 200 downloads!**

Academics and others interested in learning more about the BrainWise program have sought copies of "[Life Stress and Inhibitory Control Deficits: Teaching BrainWise in Vulnerable Populations.](#)"

Marilyn Welsh, Ph.D., Jared Greenberg, M.D., and I co-authored the chapter that was published in *Inhibitory Control Training - A Multidisciplinary Approach*.

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Pandemic fatigue and stressful life events can trigger Lizard Brain reactions. Thinking skills are in short supply. Keep up the good work and thank you for teaching others to stop and think.



Take care and be safe,



**Dr. Pat**

Please "like" us to help us get the 10 Wise Ways out to more people:



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## **On a "not quite" Lighter Note**

Comedian Kevin Hart talks about "crabs in a barrel mentality" and describes situations in his book, *I Can't Make this Up: Life Lessons by Kevin Hart*. In this video, he explains the term to Steven Colbert.



**Comedian Kevin Hart Explains 'Crab In A Barrel' Mentality"**

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