

Our Brains in Relationship - Healthy relationships helps us have a healthy brain

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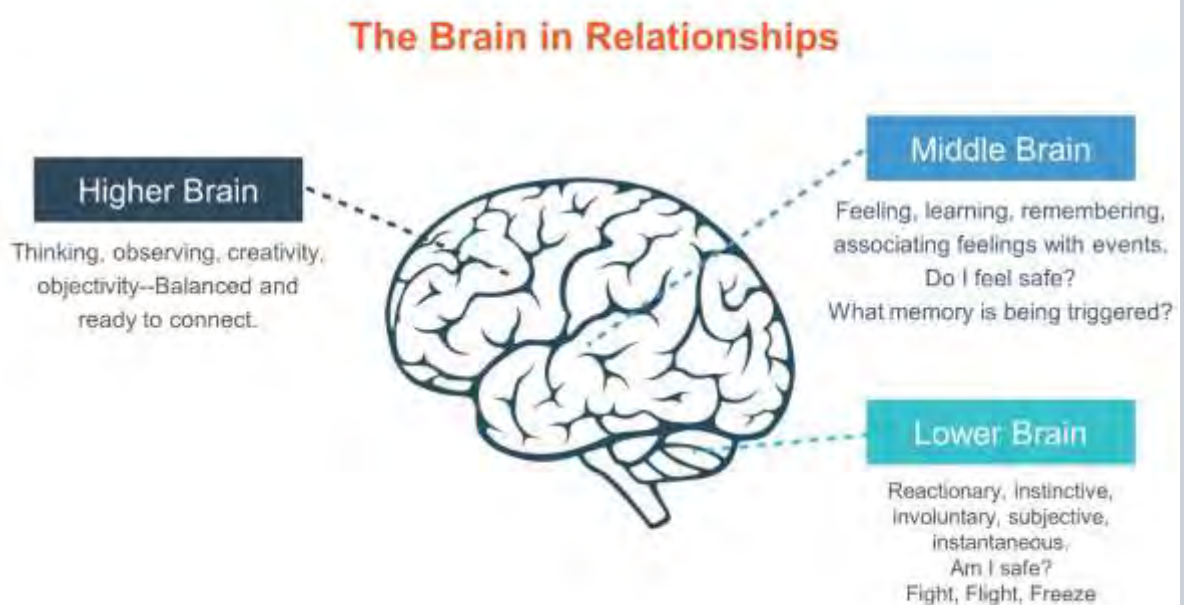
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Our Brain in Relationships

Did you know that having healthy relationships helps us to have a healthy brain? Relationship is essential to our development and helps us learn to connect and regulate our emotions and our brain. To better understand our brain in relationships, let's look at the three important parts of the brain involved:

- Amygala--The lower part of our brain that has helped us survive as a species. It is always scanning our surroundings to see if we are safe. It is also the part of the brain from which we go into fight, flight or freeze.

- Hippocampus--The middle part of our brain stores our feelings and memories and is asking if we feel safe or if this memory is triggering something to be afraid of.
- Prefrontal cortex—The higher brain is what allows all three parts of our brain to work together. It is here that we can think, observe, remember past good experiences and find win-win solutions. It is the portal through which interpersonal relationships are established.



The diagram above is one I use during **Safe Conversations** workshops that I facilitate. www.coachmyrna.org/safe-conversations.html Connecting is our deepest desire and losing connection is our greatest fear. Learning how to connect and communicate with each other without getting triggered is essential. The fact of the matter is that connection cannot occur when Fight, Flight or Freeze is engaged.

Learning how to speak to each other calmly and taking a break when we get too upset are important steps in creating connection. One way to do this for ourselves and to model this to others, especially our children, is learning to recognize when we are getting upset or triggered. Recognizing the clues--body tensing up, butterflies in our stomach, heat rising in our face or head--means I

can make a choice before I explode. We might say something like, "I am feeling really upset right now. I need to take a break but can we talk about this later?" Getting up and walking away takes us away from the situation and moving our bodies helps ground us and lessen the tension inside.

Breathing is a wonderful way to calm down. Mindful breathing is a great way to calm our heart, body and mind. Basically, it means to breathe with intention. You can do it for yourself as well as with your children or your partner. Consider beginning the day with a moment of mindful breathing or before going to sleep at night as a helpful way to unwind. Make this a ritual with your family. Doing breathing practice helps us to tune into ourselves and practice a skill when we calm that we can use when the situation arises.

One tool that I have discovered for myself is using the app *Insight Timer*. Having it on my phone means I can find a quiet place to restore calmness and connection with myself anytime of the day. A resource for teaching mindful breathing to children is: annakaharris.com/mindfulness-for-children/

Finally, expressing our appreciation to those we love strengthens our relationship. It is one thing to feel grateful for our child, spouse or friend. But when we express it to them, it enhances our connection. It says, "I notice you, you are important to me."

If you would like to know more about what I offer as a coach, please visit my website: www.coachmyrna.org/ Find out more about Safe Conversations www.coachmyrna.org/safe-conversations.html.

