



# THE BRAIN

*explained*

*For teens & tweens*



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## Tips for Use

**Empower adolescents by teaching them about their amazing brains!**

For middle and high school students, try sharing this guide:

- After introducing brain teams as part of a health, advisory, SEL, or a counseling lesson
- Following a challenging incident (once everyone is calm)
- As a brief reset at the start of a new term, unit, or behavior plan

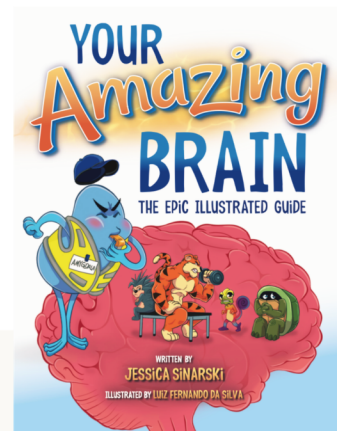
Feel free to **break the activity into two parts, invite pair sharing, or have small groups discuss or debate key ideas.**

If you're reintroducing this material, **try dividing students into teams and asking each group to teach their section to others.**

**Be sure to send a copy home to families.** Shared language makes it easier to support planning and follow-through across settings.

Some teens (and even adults) benefit from the visuals & metaphors in *Your Amazing Brain* as an approachable way to bring brain and behavior science to life.

Learn more at [BraveBrains.com/amazing](https://BraveBrains.com/amazing).

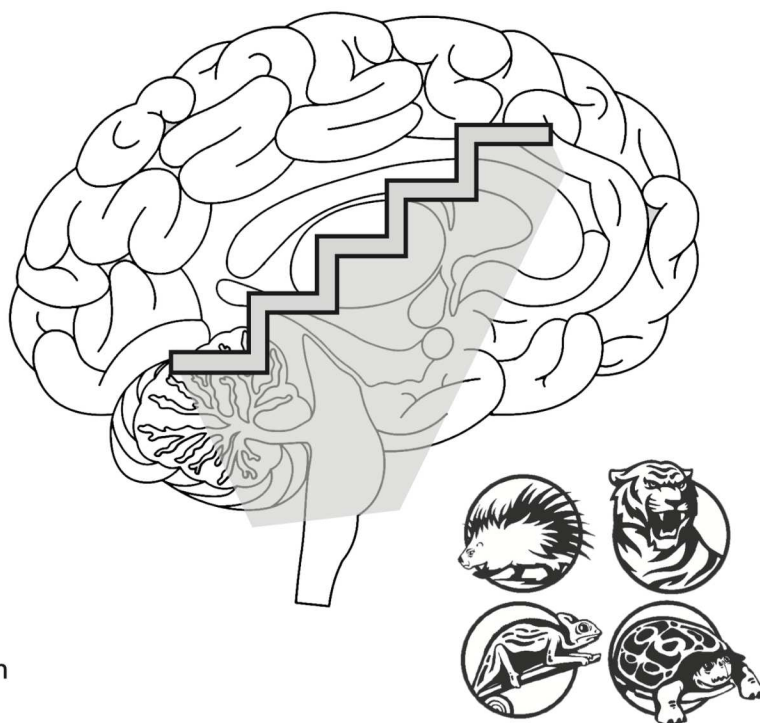


# THE BRAIN IN PROTECTION MODE

The Downstairs Brain is all about survival. This is our primitive operating system, made up of the limbic system (including the amygdala) and brain stem. It is online at birth and always on the lookout for danger.

This OS is responsible for acting without thinking. When it is in charge, we can:

- Stay alive with basic functions like breathing and heartbeat
- Activate with big Tiger or grumpy Porcupine behavior
- Lose sight of who we really are or blend in with others like a Chameleon
- Curl up in our Turtle shell to avoid harm (and sometimes miss out on good stuff too)
- Hurt ourselves and others when we get stuck in defense / self-protection mode



## In Case of Power Outage...

**COOL OFF** - Pause and breathe. Give your Upstairs Brain time to kick into action. If it's an intense power outage, you might need to walk it off, talk with someone you trust, or listen to some music while the emotional intensity settles.

**RESTART** - Remind yourself what's true: you had a Downstairs Brain moment, but you are the boss of your brain. Shake it off. You've got this!

**REPAIR** - Did you say or do something you shouldn't have while your Porcupine or Tiger brain was in charge? Did you miss an assignment while you were in Turtle mode? Did you join in some negative comments online while your Chameleon protector was running the show? Go make it better! Talk to a trusted adult if you need some help.

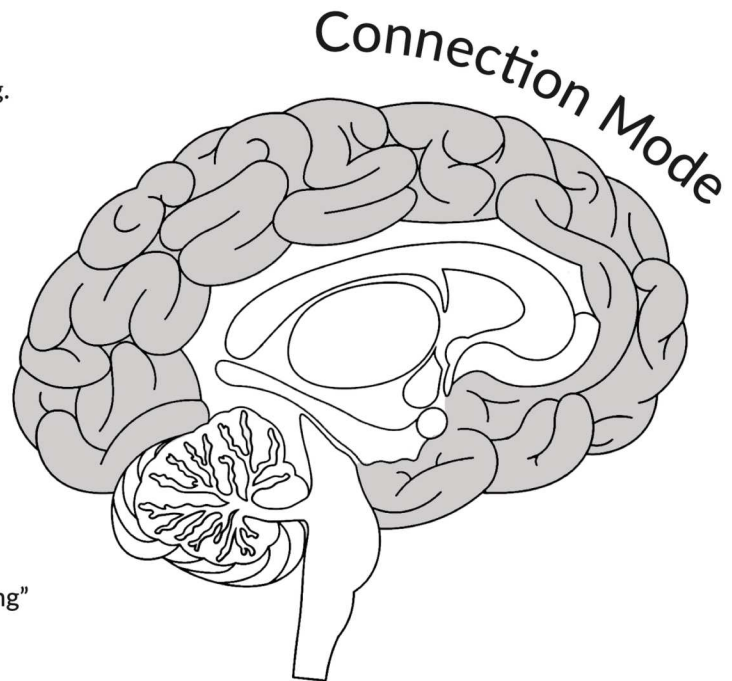
# YOUR UPSTAIRS BRAIN POWERHOUSE

This is our most advanced operating system. It is made up of the full wrinkly, outer portion of the brain known as the cerebral cortex, including the more advanced frontal lobe. The Upstairs Brain develops over time, reaching full maturity around age 26.

This OS is responsible for thinking before acting.

When it is in charge, we can:

- Enjoy time with friends
- Make thoughtful choices
- Deal with intense emotions and control impulses
- Learn new things
- Be creative
- Plan and persevere on big projects
- Care about other people
- Navigate all the complexities of “adulting”



## Enhance Your Upstairs Brain OS

- Eat some greens (and go easy on the sugar and caffeinated drinks).
- Notice your feelings. Even the uncomfortable ones have something to tell you.
- Get moving! Walking, dancing, yoga, sports, bike rides...physical activity fuels your brain.
- Check the facts. Sometimes the Downstairs Brain sends false alarms.
- Notice the good, because the Downstairs Brain is really good at noticing negative stuff.
- Connect with a trusted adult who can share some Upstairs Brain power.
- Limit screen time and skip social media in favor of real time with friends.
- Sleep! That's when your brain does all its growing, connecting, and clearing out the junk.

Circle two things from the list above that you want to do more of to boost your Upstairs Brain. Now make a plan. When and how will you make it happen? \_\_\_\_\_

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## TERMS OF USE



### PLEASE DO...

- Enjoy this resource for personal use.
- Use this resource in a classroom, family, counseling, or social work setting.
- Share [www.BraveBrains.com](http://www.BraveBrains.com) with anyone interested in obtaining this or related resources.



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Find more classroom-friendly brain (& behavior) science for your whole team in our [School Leader Starter Kit](#).