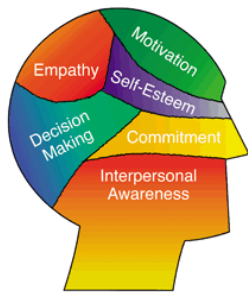




Learning Update – Summer 2017

Emotional Intelligence

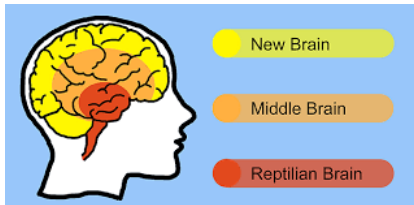
As part of our work on Growth Mindset, we have been looking at the make-up and function of the brain. Additionally, children have been finding out about how illness can affect the brain and how this impacts sufferers of diseases such as dementia.



The next phase of our learning will focus on emotional intelligence, sometimes referred to as EQ. Emotional intelligence is often considered every bit as important as IQ. We believe that intelligence can grow and that we can also develop our emotional intelligence.

The Reptilian/Lizard Brain

The human brain has evolved over thousands of years and it is widely accepted that the oldest part of our brain is responsible for making basic decisions that keep us safe. This can be referred to as the reptilian or lizard brain. The next layer of the brain to develop – the



limbic system - allows us to attach emotions to our experiences. The most recent layer

is the neocortex: this part of our brain is our super-computer and it helps us to reason, speak and imagine. However, it cannot work if the reptilian brain is active.

The reptilian brain is fast. It enables us to respond quickly. This is terrific when escaping from danger but not so good when we need to make a considered decision. The reptilian brain is also responsible for our desires to eat and to reproduce. It hates change, does not value achievement and is adverse to risks.

Everyone has a reptilian brain, but some are much better at controlling it than others.

Training Your Reptile

This half-term, children will be learning to control their reptilian brain. The first stage of this is to **recognise your reptile**: accepting that you have a reptilian brain and that it is normal. Getting to know your reptile is important – what makes it angry and what does that feel like? Some may even give their reptile a name.



The next stage is to **relax your reptile**. We need to do this to allow other parts of our brain to function properly. Strategies such as counting to 10 or thinking of a calm, safe place

may work well. Acknowledging that you are safe and deep breathing also work well for many.

The third stage is to **reward your reptile** for good behaviour. A small snack or brain break is a good reward for doing that job that you have been putting off for a while or responding well to a stressful situation.

Through completing the first three stages we can gradually re-model our reptile, keeping it under control, so that we are able to use other parts of our brain to make better decisions. We can let go of negative thoughts and allow our values to dictate the way we look at situations.



We know that children can be quick to enter the reptilian brain phase and that it can take time to relax the reptile. The thought of an assessment, sharing views with the class or not getting your own way can all activate the reptile. We hope that learning more about the reptilian brain will help us to better understand and control it.

Further reading:

http://www.copingskills4kids.net/Reptilian_Coping_Brain.html