

The Brain in the Palm of the Hand
Preparing the Ground: Self-regulation
 Brain in the hand is based on work by Daniel J. Siegel, MD*.

<p>Objective:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To teach students and teachers about the need to self-calm and re-gather. • To invite students to think about self-regulation pro-actively. • To create a positive time out space. <p>Materials:</p> <p>Board</p> <p>Comments for teachers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This activity looks long, but can be done quickly. We recommend you do steps 1-7 one day and come back, review the brain in the hand and move on to step 8 the next day. • We function best when we have access to all parts of our brain. Under stress the prefrontal cortex doesn't work well and we lose our problem solving skills. • When the part of our brain that allows us to think and respond respectfully is not functioning well, we can help ourselves and others by taking some time to “come back into ourselves.” • To watch Dr. Daniel Siegel demonstrating this go to: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DD-IfPIFBfk • For further details on this model for the brain, study <i>Parenting from the Inside Out</i> by Daniel J. Siegel, MD & Mary Hartzell, New York: Jeremy P. Tarcher/Putnam, 2003, p. 171 - 183. 	<p>Directions:</p> <p>1. Setting the stage. Invite students to think of a time that they got really upset. List a few examples on the board of things that are upsetting to them (no names).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask them if they can remember if it felt like they had a choice about what they did? • Did it matter to them what the other person was feeling or thinking? <p>2. Introducing the “brain in the palm of the hand”.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain that you will use your hand to model a brain. (See drawings next page.) • Point to your wrist. The part that is closest to your spine and near the base of your skull is called the <i>brain stem</i>. It keeps you awake or asleep, makes sure you breathe and makes sure your heart keeps beating. It also keeps you safe. • Fold your thumb across your palm. The middle part of your brain is where you process emotions and store your memories (<i>limbic area</i>). It is also where you have your “safety radar” (your <i>amygdala</i>). • Fold your fingers over your thumb so you have a fist. The outer layer of your brain is called the <i>cortex</i>. It is where your thinking and planning happens. • Point to your fingernails. The area of the cortex that is right up front is the <i>prefrontal cortex</i>. It is where the brain processes information about how we relate to others: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Understanding others’ feelings - Ability to calm ourselves - Ability to make choices - Morality - Ability to sense what is going on for others (read body language) <p>3. Flipping our lid. When we are really stressed or upset, the prefrontal cortex shuts down and no longer works with the rest of our brain.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lift the fingers up so they are straight and the thumb is still across the palm. • We say, “We flip our lid.” • Explain that we “flip our lid” when the thinking part (prefrontal cortex) of our brain isn’t working. It becomes
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