

Mindful Emotion Coaching

'working with schools and communities to develop resilience and mental wellbeing'

Mindful Emotion Coaching is about building emotional resilience and mental wellbeing by enabling conversations about emotions behind behaviours and building understanding of the neuroscience of brain development, human interactions and mindful awareness. Some people would say we are working with the neurobiological, emotional and social aspects of human interactions, others might use the term interpersonal neurobiology.

We look closely at the work of [Dan Siegel](#) and [John Gottman](#) and focus on the 'how to' of developing emotion resilience.

We look at how to manage our own emotions when young people are struggling to regulate theirs. We identify the core human emotions and how the brain reacts when we find ourselves in danger of 'flipping our lids'.

We look at the 5 practical steps of Emotion Coaching and how to apply these in everyday situations.

In terms of what people take away from the training here is some feedback from sessions:

- I have used this directly with a 1:1 child and used the hand model with parents as a tool to help explain what happens when their child 'flips their lid'.
- I have used this directly with a parent at my school to look at her own emotions and how they impact on her children.
- I enjoyed the day and found the content user friendly
- Good tools for working with children, classes and families, really helpful prompts.
- Have used it with my class and have linked it with mindfulness

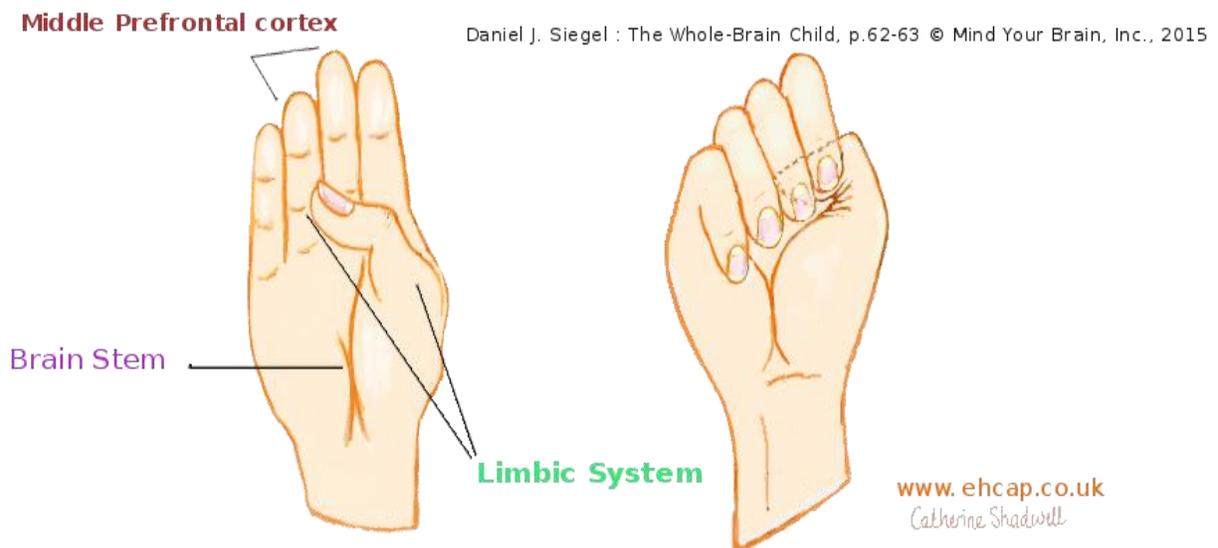
The training is multiagency, multi age and designed to be run by two facilitators.

Our On Line Resources www.emotioncoaching.co.uk and www.mindfulemotioncoaching.co.uk provide the core information, enabling us all to keep a common language across services as well as with parents and young people.

Dan Siegel is a neuroscientist in the States – he has developed a simple metaphor for emotion regulation which he calls The Hand Model. There are links to his You Tube Clips at www.mindfulemotioncoaching.co.uk.

Our human brain is a social organ and needs other brains to interact with to work at its best.

We use Dan Siegel's Hand Model metaphor to enable easy access to understanding the importance of inter connectedness within the brain itself and also with other brains.



The part of the brain that governs emotion is represented by the thumb and acts like an accelerator on areas that govern body function. The thinking part of the brain acts as a brake on emotions and is represented by the finger tips.

When the thumb is active and the fingers pushed up we have 'Flipped our Lid' – we are *reactive* (reactive response). When the thumb is calm and the fist is closed representing motorways of connections between different areas of the brain we are *responsive*.

When we are responsive we make our best decisions – this is when the fist is closed and the different parts of their brains connect well with each other.

We can learn to calm the reactivity of our brain through emotion coaching techniques and mindfulness exercises. Dan Siegel uses the phrase 'Name it to Tame it'. (reference Dan Siegel The Whole Brain Child)

One of the ways the thinking part of our brain works to calm our bodily responses is through stimulation of the vagus nerve (this is known as Vagal Tone). The vagus nerve travels from the brain stem to all the key organs in the body doing things like lowering heart rate and breathing rates.

The relevance of relationships to early brain development.

Through non-invasive scanning of very young babies and children, the brain has been understood to be a 'social organ.' The normal development of the brain relies on stimulation through social interaction and is influenced as well by other factors including epigenetics, physical health, and diet. Key figures in the research in this area include John Bowlby, Mary Ainsworth, and Mary Main.

All this means is that a baby is born with a basic brain structure. Then neural connections are encouraged by stimulating that brain through interaction.

Connections form in human brains all the time – but the bulk of the connections are made in the first two years of life.

The brain is organized into different areas of responsibility – including sight, smell, emotions, logic, and memory. The different areas are connected by a network of a hundred billion neurons. The more we use the network, the more connections are made and the bigger, better and faster the developing brain becomes.

John Gottman and Emotion Coaching

John Gottman is an American psychologist who has studied human relationships for decades. He describes 4 relationship styles : Emotion Coaching Style, Dismissing Style (often motivated by a desire to fix eg don't worry, you'll be fine), , Disapproving Style (often motivated by a desire to control or regain power) and Laissez Faire Style. Children with a parent or carer who used the Emotion Coaching Style at least 30% of the time had improved outcomes into adulthood (sociability, achievement, health).

The main message of Emotion Coaching is that all emotions are OK but not all behavior is OK....

[Paul Ekman](#) has studied emotions and facial expressions across many cultures and was able to conclude that human emotions are universal. Everything we see, feel, touch, and taste (i.e., 'experience') passes through the emotional part of our brain (how we feel) and the thinking part of our brain (how we respond to the feeling). He describes six core emotions that all humans experience. Anger, Sadness, Disgust, Surprise, Fear and Joy.

[John Gottman's five steps of Emotion Coaching](#)

1. Tune in.
2. Connect with the people around you.
3. Recognise feelings and empathise with them.
4. Validate feelings – try to define and label them.
5. Problem solve and where necessary impose limits.

Emotion coaching is about building and enriching relationships. The problem solving comes last – after you've talked about your feelings.

Seeing the brain as a social organ dependent upon relationships with other people and understanding how our brains develop early on in our lives helps us all understand our emotions.

As we get better at understanding how the emotion centre in our brain connects with other areas we can start to change how we behave and become more responsive.

Dr Sarah Temple MRCP

References

Gottman, J. M. & DeClair, J. (1997). *The Heart of Parenting: Raising an Emotionally Intelligent Child*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

<https://www.gottman.com/about/research/> - Professor John Gottman Research Base

Daniel J Siegel *The Whole Brain Child*

<http://www.drdansiegel.com/about/mindsight/> - Dr Dan Siegel Research base

Developing Adult Capabilities- Center on the Developing Child, Harvard University