



"The difference I have seen in some of our year 5s is incredible. This will really help the move to secondary! "
Head Teacher- Surrey

The Brain Friends: A Whole-School Approach to SEN-Inclusive Emotional Regulation

The Brain Friends is a neuroscience-based, child-friendly framework that helps children understand and manage their emotions. Using engaging characters that represent key brain functions, The Brain Friends makes emotional regulation accessible, fun, and effective for all learners, particularly those with SEN.

A whole-school approach to emotional regulation benefits everyone—students, teachers, and staff. The Brain Friends model equips schools with practical, evidence-based tools to support self-regulation, resilience, and positive behaviour management. The Brain Friends supports an SEN-inclusive school.

- ✓ Enhances Emotional Literacy – Helps students recognise, name, and regulate emotions in a simple, relatable way.
- ✓ Supports Co-Regulation – Teachers and staff learn how to model emotional regulation, fostering a calm learning environment.
- ✓ Reduces Behavioural Challenges – Teaches proactive strategies that prevent meltdowns and encourage positive interactions.
- ✓ Builds Executive Functioning Skills – Supports attention, impulse control, and problem-solving through engaging activities.
- ✓ Sensory & Interoception-Friendly – Integrates movement, mindfulness, and sensory tools to meet diverse learning needs.

Whole-School Benefits

- For Students: Improved self-awareness, emotional regulation, and resilience.
- For Teachers: A shared language to discuss emotions and clear strategies for behaviour management.
- For Leadership: A structured, research-backed approach that fosters a positive, inclusive school culture.

How to Get Started

The Brain Friends offers training, resources, and curriculum support to integrate the model into daily school life. From classroom strategies to designated "Len Dens" (safe regulation spaces), we help schools create environments where every child can thrive.





Meet The Brain Friends: Lenny, Mylo, Orla and of course, Brilliant Brain! The Brain Friends use characterisation to create simple and memorable ways to help a child develop their self-regulation, ability to label emotions and to engage in learning.

Children enjoy learning about the relationship between their body, emotions and thinking brain by associating them with each character. They learn to tend and tame each character in sequence in order to regulate and develop self-awareness.

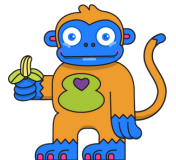
Lenny Lizard

Lenny lizard lives in the brainstem. He runs the body and is in charge of our basic survival instincts. He lives downstairs with his brain friend Mylo Monkey. When his needs are met and he is functioning well, he keeps our body calm and relaxed. We call this being regulated. When his needs aren't met he becomes dysregulated.



Mylo Monkey

Meet Mylo Monkey lives in the limbic system. He runs our emotions and helps to keep us safe from harm. He looks after the amygdala - our body's alarm system which sends us into FIGHT, FLIGHT, FREEZE and our hippocampus that manages our memories. When his needs are met and he is functioning well, he keeps our feelings balanced and our bodies calm. He lives downstairs with his brainstem friend Lenny Lizard.



Orla Owl

Orla lives in the Pre Frontal Cortex area of the brain. She loves to think, learn, process and use language to communicate. When her needs are met she helps her friends Lenny and Mylo to express themselves. She lives in the upstairs brain and has a creative and a logical side to her. When she isn't working well she flies away which makes it difficult to think and learn.



Brilliant Brain

Brilliant Brain helps children to learn that their brain can develop and grow. It is plastic and learns by repetition and practice. He helps the children to look after their brain friends so that they can discover, create and be curious about the world around them.

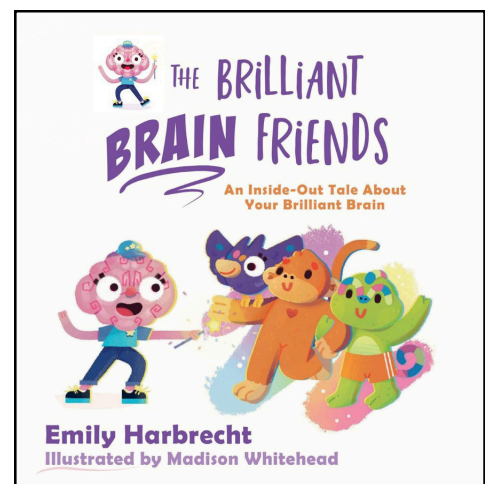


"Signs of dysregulation can be found on the face—wide eyes, looking around the room, looks of anger, surprise or disgust, body gestures, needing to move, perhaps pushing or hitting, etc. Those are signs of sympathetic NS (nervous system) activation." Dr Delahook, author Beyond Behaviors

The Brain Friends uses a variety of resources to teach the concept to children ranging from posters, feelings cards, assemblies, pre-recorded video trainings for kids and teacher led activities. **There is also a short story book available on Amazon!**

The Brain Friends concept is not just for children. The concept also helps adults to reflect on their own needs and wellbeing. It encourages staff to reflect on the age-appropriate expectations of children that are neurodivergent and demonstrating unmet needs.

The Brain Friends model supports these areas by identifying the child's basic needs, through giving them the language and a way of expressing their emotions and through aiding the development of their pre frontal cortex.





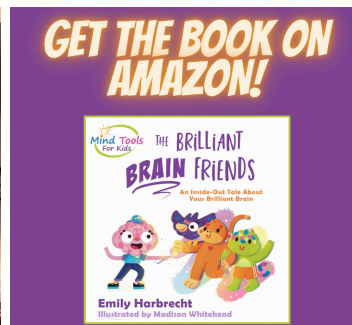
EVIDENCE AND ORIGINS

The Brain Friends™ approach helps children to identify their bodily sensations through raising their awareness of interoception. The characterisation helps children to differentiate and also link together the sensations inside their body, their emotions and the tools they can use to reflect and reason.

Interoception gives us the ability to sense what is happening inside our bodies. From being aware of our heartbeat, hunger and even whether we need the toilet, it is also closely linked with emotional regulation.

Every emotion we experience is linked to a specific sensation inside the body. Nervous or anxious feelings are often described as 'knots in the stomach' or as having 'butterflies'. And the reaction to shock or stress, 'my heart skipped a beat'. These sensations that we feel inside the body are signals of interoception.

When children can understand, identify and effectively process the sensations inside their bodies, they have a better ability to use emotional regulation techniques. This helps them to better manage situations where they may have previously had unhelpful emotional reactions.



The Three R's: Reaching The Learning Brain. Dr Bruce Perry, a pioneering neuroscientist in the field of trauma, has shown us that to help a vulnerable child to learn, think and reflect, we need to intervene in a simple sequence. The Brain Friends is based around Perry's Neurosequential Model: Regulate, Relate and Reason. We need to progress through the 3 R's in this specific sequence to get back to a regulated state.

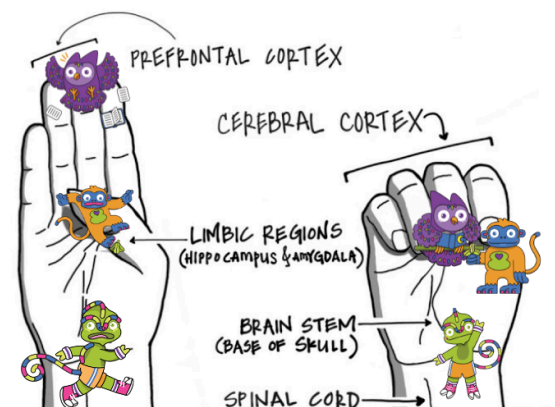
First Regulate: We must help the child to regulate and calm their fight/flight/freeze responses.

Second Relate: We must relate and connect with the child through an attuned and sensitive relationship.

Third Reason: We can support the child to reflect, learn, remember, articulate and become self-assured.

Heading straight for the 'reasoning' part of the brain with an expectation of learning, will not work well if the child is dysregulated and feeling disconnected from others.

Daniel Siegel's Hand Model of the Brain explains how we can use the frontal cortex (logical part) in our brains to train ourselves, with practice, to moderate the fight/flight/freeze/appease reaction which is our impulsive, knee-jerk reaction to threat. The hand model of the brain refers to the 3 key areas that we use in characterisation – the brainstem, limbic region and cortex. We incorporate this when explaining the relationship between The Brain Friends when regulated and dysregulated.



The Brain Friends and other Emotional Literacy Aids

The Brain Friends integrates well with existing emotional literacy offers. The Brain Friends model seeks to provide teachers, children and parents with the education and understanding required to fully achieve a whole school, regulated learning environment. Emotional literacy works at the skills and capabilities level of a wider scope of integration.



My Brain pumps
adrenalin when I am
in fight or flight. I can
feel it in my hands
and feet.

Ralph age 8

The Brain Friends
help me understand
what is happening in
my body when I'm
angry. Eva age 9

My Mylo Monkey
helps me to name my
feelings and notice
where they are in my
body. Nancy age 5

Regulation means
you are in a good
state and can handle
life's challenges.

Ethan, age 10

My Lenny needs alot
of water and rest
otherwise he goes
into flight

Jackson, age 9

My Orla Owl needs my
body and emotions to be
in a good space.

Sydney, age 10

My Lenny Lizard
needs water, food,
sleep and for me to
be active and off my
ipad.

Caitlyn, age 10

When my Lenny is
dysregulated I can't think
properly. I know I need
water and to move my
body!

Akshaj - age 10

The Brain Friends give children understanding and awareness. It gives them the tools and knowledge to make the connection between their thoughts and feelings in their mind and body. It empowers them to interpret and understand their nervous system. It normalises making the connection with what they are feeling on the inside and helps them utilise strategies to change how they show up on the outside.

To find out more about The Brain Friends email emily@thebrainfriends.co.uk

www.thebrainfriends.co.uk