Introduction Lesson Plan

Brain Talk
Upper Elementary

Target Concepts

- The brain is the control center for thoughts, emotions, and behaviors.
- Thoughts, emotions, and behaviors come in varying forms.

Lesson Preparation

- ✓ Read and/or review the video, script, lesson plan, and handouts.
- ✓ Print instructor "Know/Wonder/ Learned" primer worksheet (one copy for instructor).
- ✓ Print "Know/Wonder "primer worksheet (one per student).
- ✓ Print "Home Letter" (one per student).

Review

This is the first unit in the Brain Talk curriculum and therefore has no review.

Primer

This primer activity is designed to prepare students for the lesson by activating known information to scaffold new learning. Students are asked to consider what they know and what they wonder about the brain.

The following script is intended to provide a general guide for how you may choose to lead this activity:

- "We are going to be learning and talking about the brain."
- "Let's make a Know/Wonder Chart to show what we already know and what we wonder about the brain."
- "What do you know about your brain? Have you ever heard or do you know any interesting facts about brains?"
- "Have you ever wondered about how our brains work? What sort of questions do you have about your brain and the way it works?"

The instructor may use the "Know/Wonder/ Learned: instructor primer worksheet as a model to create a KWL chart with the class. The Learned column can be filled in during the class discussion following the video.

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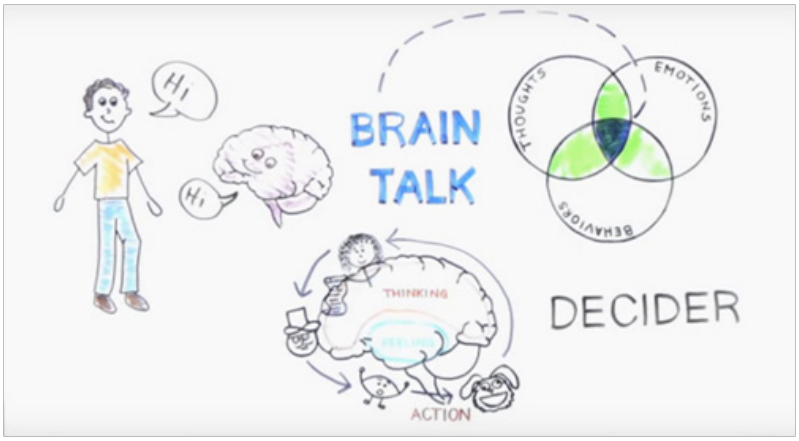
Watch Video: Brain Talk



Guided Instruction

Discussion Points:

- This is the first lesson in a series of lessons to help you get to know your brain and how it works.
- What did we learn about the brain? Add student responses to the *KW* chart in a new, *Learned* column.
- What three things does the brain control?

  (Thoughts, emotions, behaviors)

  - What are different types of thoughts? (Thoughts that just appear versus problem solving thoughts)
  - What are different types of emotions? (Gentle emotions versus strong emotions-see Teacher Notes)
  - What are different types of behaviors? (Reactions versus responses)

Activity:

- Group discussion with *KWL* chart for the class.

Background Information

- The brain is a complex decision-making organ, with multiple drives and impulses competing for control of our attention and actions.
- Metacognition, or *thinking about our thinking,* plays a critical role in successful decision making and learning.
- Metacognitive awareness is a skill that enables one's ability to respond thoughtfully instead of reacting impulsively.
- Teaching students how to be more aware of the connections between their thoughts, feelings, and behaviors as they relate to decision-making is a foundational skill in developing metacognitive awareness.

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Teacher Notes

- This curriculum uses the words “behaviors” and “actions” interchangeably. Note that the video uses a Venn diagram to represent thoughts, emotions, and behaviors, while the unit symbol and some worksheets use the TEA Venn diagram to represent thoughts, emotions, and actions.
- We do not refer to emotions as positive or negative since all emotions carry important messages. One way we refer to emotions in Brain Talk is gentle or strong; all emotions have gentle and strong forms. Another way we refer to emotions in this curriculum is comfortable or uncomfortable. Often uncomfortable emotions alert us to important information in our environments.
- Reactions are not inherently problematic. There are situations in which quick reactions and reactive thinking are needed for a safe outcome. Reactions become problematic when a more thoughtful response to a situation is needed.

Taking it Further

- Begin to expand students’ emotional vocabulary through activities like: emotion of the day, emotion word wall, emotion “dictionary,” etc.
- Students can determine *shades of an emotion* (i.e., gentle to strong forms of a target emotion) on a 5-Point Scale or 5-shade paint chip.
- Help students experience fast, automatic thoughts versus slower, problem-solving thoughts by completing the Stroop Color Test: http://www.sciencebuddies.org/Files/3001/2/HumBeh_p027_StroopWords.pdf