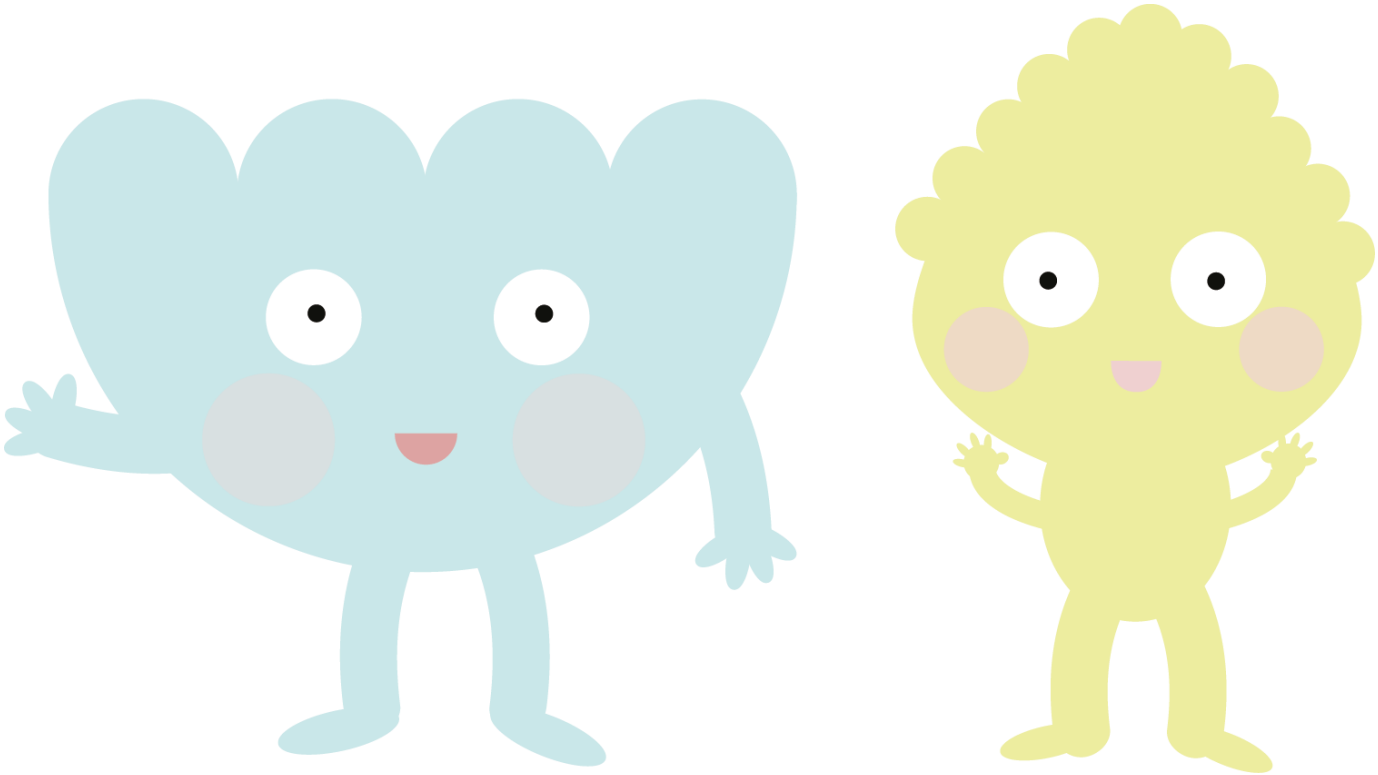
Teach Your Class: Meet Your Brain

Year 1

Meet Your Brain



The Meet Your Brain module is all about how your brain works and how you can help it to be at it's very best!

Meet your brain - Module overview

This module is focused on giving children a foundation knowledge of the brain and teaching them how they can look after their minds to be at their very best. It is critical that the children understand the following key concepts/topic areas by the end of this module as they form a key component of the CARE model which follows.

Your brain and your mind are different:
Children learn that their brain is an organ and that it has many functions. They learn that the brain controls most of what we do and that, it is an amazing thing!

Neuroplasticity:
To formulate a basic knowledge of the concept of neuroplasticity i.e. That the brain can grow and change when you practice and work on something. When we do something or learn something, neural pathways are created in our brain. Each time we repeat the activity, the neural pathway or connection is made stronger and it gets easier for us to complete the activity.

Team H-A-P:
The children will learn about three key parts of their brain; Hippocampus, Amygdala and Prefrontal Cortex. We call them Team H-A-P for short and they each have a special role:
Hippocampus - is like a scrap book storing our memories and things that we learn. Amygdala - is there to react to keep us safe when there is danger. It cannot assess danger though, it can only react if it senses it by fighting, freezing or flighting! Prefrontal cortex - Helps us to make decisions, understand different perspectives, solve problems, analyse and make choices.

Meet your brain - Module overview

The key concept here is that we can be at our best when Team H-A-P are working together. When we feel stressed or worried, Team H-A-P cannot work well together and our Amygdala will take over and cause us to react (without thinking) rather than respond (assessing our actions before we take them).

When we feel stressed, worried or sense danger the Amygdala takes over and Team H-A-P don't work well together. This happens because the oxygen supply goes straight to the Amygdala which, effectively shuts down the Prefrontal cortex and Hippocampus and the functions that they help us to perform.

The children learn that when this happens, the best thing that they can do is something called Happy breathing, this is slow calm breathing and is scientifically proven to help calm the mind especially, the Amygdala.

Extension activities and top tips

There will be many opportunities for you to reinforce the learning and the language that the children pick up during this module. Calling it out when you see someone having a 'neuroplasticity moment' because they have got better at a task they have practiced for example, is a great way to make the language and the learning stick!

You will find lots of opportunity to do this throughout the school day across all parts of the curriculum.

As you and your class become more familiar with the neuroscience language and terms that we use, we are confident you will find endless ways to integrate this into the school day.
We recommend if at all possible to complete this first module in as confined a time period as you can, ideally over no more than 2-3 weeks. This really helps the learning to stick and for the children to quickly get into the mindset. Then, the following mind workouts can be delivered at a pace that suits you and your class.

Key resources include:

myHappymind journals which include the key concepts taught about Team H-A-P and neuroplasticity and plenty of space for reflection and learning notes and/or drawings.

Posters that capture the key concepts taught for you to have on display.

Poster to capture neuroplasticity moments.

The journals and posters have multiple uses, the key is to talk about the new concepts and terms as much as possible and to keep them highly visible!

Specific notes for each Mind Workout (MWO):

MWO 1

During this MWO lots of terms and language will be introduced that the children may not be familiar with. Please do spend the time you need to ensure they grasp them through discussion and or any other teaching methods you see fit.

MWO 2

There is lots of recap activity in this MWO. It is useful for the children to have their journals with them to help them with this and refer to some of the pictures and characters.

MWO 3

During the happy breathing exercise, there may be some children who struggle to focus. This is OK. Some will find it hard to do this at first but with practice they will improve. It is important that they are given this message so that they try it again. We suggest that you get the children settled and sat quietly before you click the happy breathing button on the relevant slide. Note there is a couple of seconds delay after you have clicked it before the exercise starts. We find that when children understand the science of what happens when they do happy breathing they are more willing to try it. So, ensuring this understanding is solidified before they start the exercise is key.

MWO 4

There is happy breathing in this MWO so please ensure your class is set up appropriately. There is also lots of opportunity for discussion and group work.

MWO 5

There is happy breathing in this MWO so please ensure your class is set up appropriately. There is also lots of opportunity for discussion and group work. During this MWO you will have the chance to play a game, the learning objective of this game it to demonstrate neuroplasticity i.e. when we do something over and over again, we get better at it. You could choose any number of things like, balancing on one leg, learning a clap sequence, or passing a ball to each other in a certain way e.g. double bouncing. The key thing is that children see an improvement after a few turns so that you can reiterate this as an example of neuroplasticity in action.

"Education is not the learning of facts, but the training of the mind to think."

myHappymind