

Early Learning Newsletter: Autumn Term 2019 (October)

Laying strong foundations for self – regulation

This term we have been focusing on self – regulation, which is really important for your child to enable them to become ready for school. Self-regulation is about making the right choices and being able to think about the impact of our own behaviour on other people. This is really hard for young children, who are more concerned with their own needs than those of others. Some children find it easier than others to self-regulate.

To help children to understand their feelings and emotions, we can talk to them about the importance of their brain and the job it does in controlling what they do. It's a very difficult concept, but with the right support and if we choose the right words, children can understand complex ideas.

Once they understand that the brain is responsible for knowledge and power, they can begin to understand that they have the power to make their own 'good' choices. We can help them to understand and respond in a positive way to our children when they need our help to self-regulate.

We have taken some ideas from an article written by Dr Hazel Harrison (2019), and her concept of the 'Brain House'. This is a really good model that you might want to use at home.

THE BRAIN HOUSE:

The Brain House, explains a child's brain as having an upstairs and a downstairs. Together, you and your child can talk and think about who lives in their 'brain house' and maybe tell stories about them. We talk about who lives upstairs and downstairs in the two parts of the brain, to encourage children to think about what is going on inside their heads.

The characters living 'upstairs' in your child's 'brain house' do the thinking and problem solving. They can be called 'Calming Carl' and 'Creative Craig'; your child might think of different names – two characters is about right.

Those who live 'downstairs' are the feeling characters. They might be 'Alerting Alfie' and 'Frightened Fred'. They help to keep us safe and look out for danger, sound the alarm and make sure we are ready to fight, run or hide when we're faced with a threat. This is the part of the brain that is based on our instinct for survival, focused on keeping us safe and ensuring our basic needs are met.

You can change the name to suit your child's typical 'disregulated' behaviours, for example, 'Angry Archie or Screaming Sally' .

When the characters from upstairs and downstairs talk to each other, our brains are working most effectively and we feel calm. This can be explained to children as everyone in the 'brain house' listening to each other. When they don't listen to each other, and everyone starts shouting and making noise, it is hard to understand what the people in the brain house are trying to tell us. When this happens and everyone is making a big noise in the house we say the house has 'flipped its lid'.

Everyone 'flips their lid' sometimes – not just children.

