

A note from the **SCES SCHOOL COUNSELING DEPARTMENT**

Dear Swift Creek Families,

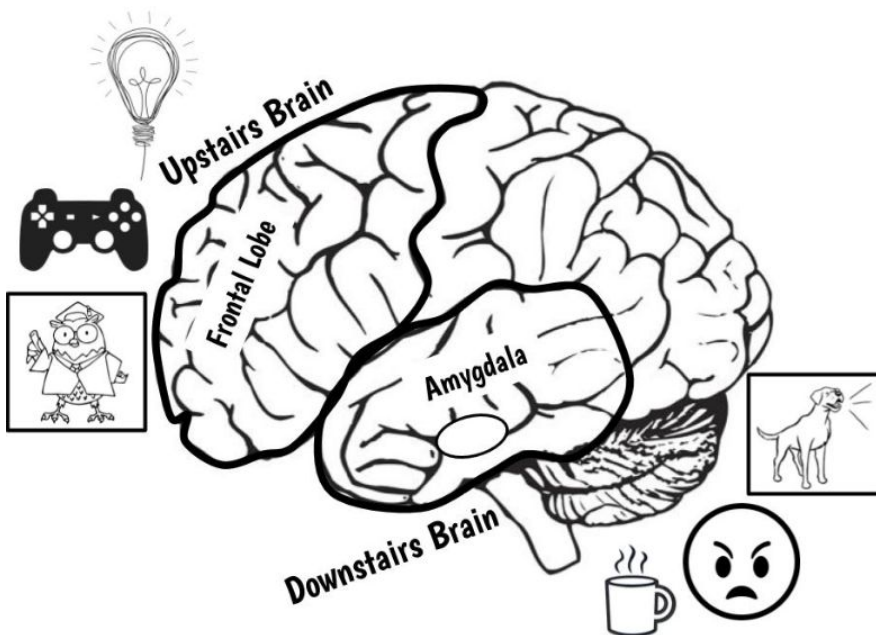
This year we have been visiting classrooms to teach students about how emotions impact their brain's ability to function. We wanted to share the information presented with families so that student's ability to regulate their emotions can be enforced at home as well as school. When children receive the same message at home and at school learning is improved dramatically.

During the lesson we established two basic zones of the brain: the upstairs brain and the downstairs brain. Below is a description of these parts.

UPSTAIRS BRAIN: This part of the brain is responsible for our ability to problem solve, consider the impact of our actions (cause and effect), maintain self-control, generate new ideas, etc. We have explained this part of the brain using two visuals- remote control and a light bulb. We call this part of our brain the **WISE OWL**.

DOWNSTAIRS BRAIN: This part of our brain is responsible for keeping us safe. It's highly reactive and it senses danger. For example, if our hand touches something hot we immediately pull it away. This is our downstairs brain in action! Additionally, this part of our brain can also be triggered by our emotions. We have explained this part of the brain using the visual- angry emoji and a cup of coffee. We call this part the **WATCHDOG**.

What does this have to do with student's emotional regulation?



Normally, our downstairs brain and upstairs brain are constantly communicating. They work together to react to situations, solve problems, and process information. However, when our downstairs brain senses danger it will stop communicating with the upstairs brain. Danger can come in many forms, for example, sometimes our downstairs brain will think uncomfortable emotions (stress, anger, hunger, etc.) are danger. When danger is detected by our downstairs brain, our upstairs brain is no longer part of the "conversation" and our downstairs brain takes over.

This is why when we feel uncomfortable emotions we will sometimes make poor decisions, do things out of character, or seem to react without thinking.

How can we use this information to help students at home and at school?

AT SCHOOL: Teachers will be using this brain language when discussing situations with students at school. For example, if a student seems to be overwhelmed by a test the teacher may say, "I can see you are stressed right now, your downstairs brain may be trying to take over. Why don't you select a break and then we can try this again?"

When students recognize that their downstairs brain is taking over we also want them to self-regulate by doing an identified strategy/break. Students have learned that their body sends them warning signs when their downstairs brain is starting to take over (see table below for some examples, warning signs can vary from person to person).

RAPID HEART BEAT	TENSE MUSCLES	RAPID BREATHING	CRYING	YELLING
FLUSHED OR HOT FACE	BUSY BRAIN OR RACING THOUGHTS	UNABLE TO STAY STILL OR SHAKY	BUTTERFLIES IN STOMACH OR PAINS	

AT HOME: If you decide to use this same language with your child it can be very impactful. All students benefit from support with emotional regulation because everyone experiences uncomfortable emotions. Take a moment to talk to your child about the uncomfortable emotions they feel. Have them share with you the symptoms or warning signs they experience. Then identify some strategies for regaining control and bringing our upstairs brain back into gear. Writing down these strategies down and posting them somewhere in your home is helpful. This way, in those challenging moments (when our brain isn't working properly) we have a tool to remind us what to do.

As a role-model for your child you can also share what uncomfortable emotions trigger you. Talk about how your body warns you that your downstairs brain is taking over and identify strategies you use in those moments. Doing this self-reflection with your child is powerful and helps them to realize that everyone can be overwhelmed by an uncomfortable emotion.

POSSIBLE STRATEGIES...

DRAW OR COLOR	TAKE A WALK	BE ALONE	LISTEN TO CALMING MUSIC	BRAIN PRETZEL
TAKE 5 SLOW DEEP BREATHS	READ	GET A HUG	EAT A SNACK OR DRINK WATER	KICK A BALL
GET UNDER SOME COVERS	STRETCH YOUR MUSCLES	THROW A BALL OR PLAY A GAME	SWING ON A SWING OR HAMMOCK	PLAY WITH PLAYDOH

DO YOU WANT TO LEARN MORE? We are trying to determine if holding a Parent Workshop on this topic would be beneficial. Topics would include more information on the brain's functions and strategies for supporting our student's emotional regulation at home. If you would be interested in attending this training or would like more information please go to: <http://bit.ly/SCESWORKSHOP> (this link is case-sensitive) or use the QR code to complete a quick survey. If you do not have access to the internet feel free to call Mrs. Bazemore at 739-6305 (x4116).

