



Helping **ourselves** to feel **better**

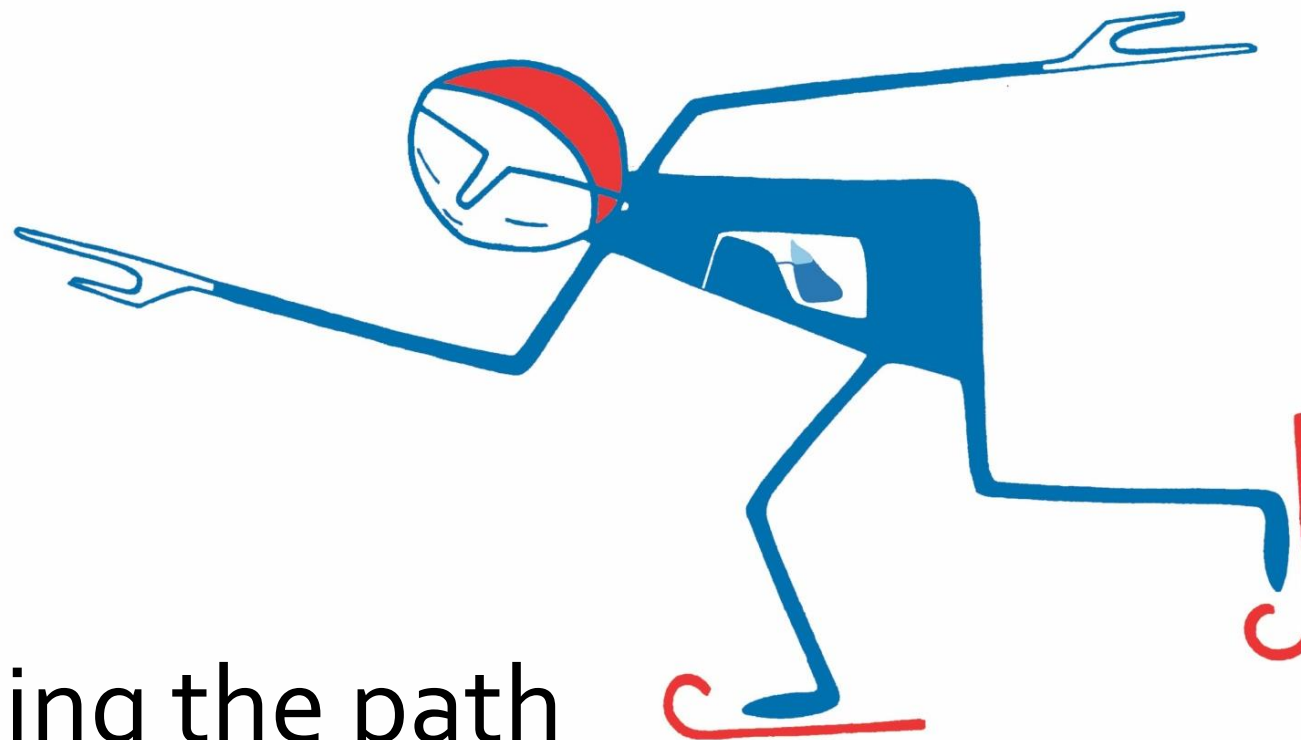
(Vagal tone and self-regulation)



Riding the ups and downs



Keeping in
balance



Smoothing the path

How the brain responds to stress

'Flipping the Lid' (Using the hand model of the brain)

Make a fist with your thumb tucked inside your fingers. This is a model of your brain.



Thumb and palm = Downstairs brain (Limbic system)

This is where emotions and memories are processed, it is also where the fight, flight, freeze type responses are triggered.

Fingers = Upstairs brain (Cerebral Cortex)

This is the rational part of the brain that houses our ability to think, reason and problem solve.

How the brain responds to stress

‘Flipping the Lid’ (Using the hand model of the brain)

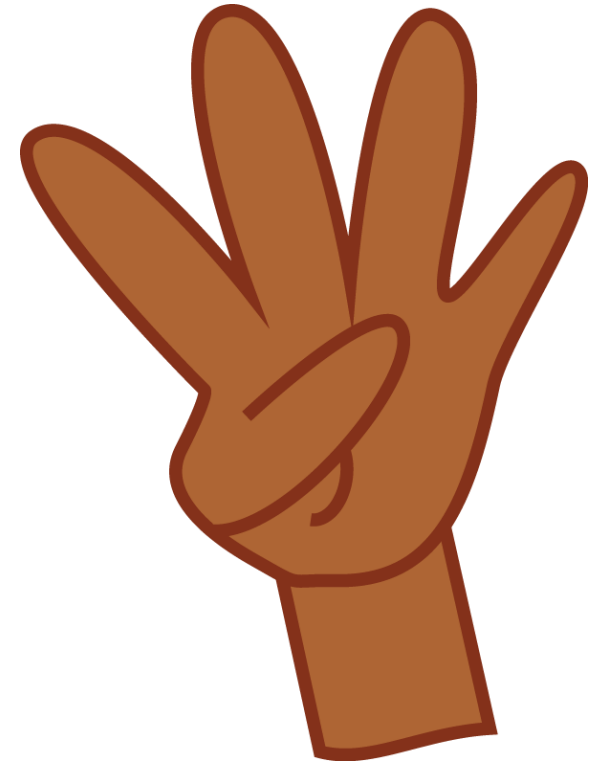


When something triggers us, causing a build up of emotions, we are prone to ‘Flip our Lid’.

When we flip our lid, we may display behaviours such as shouting, crying, lashing out, running away etc.

Our rational, logical thinking is being overwhelmed by our emotions making it hard to think clearly.

To put it simply, our upstairs brain is struggling to talk to our downstairs brain.



How might Felix react to.....

...not being allowed
on his device

...going to visit
someone he doesn't
like

...having to go to bed
early

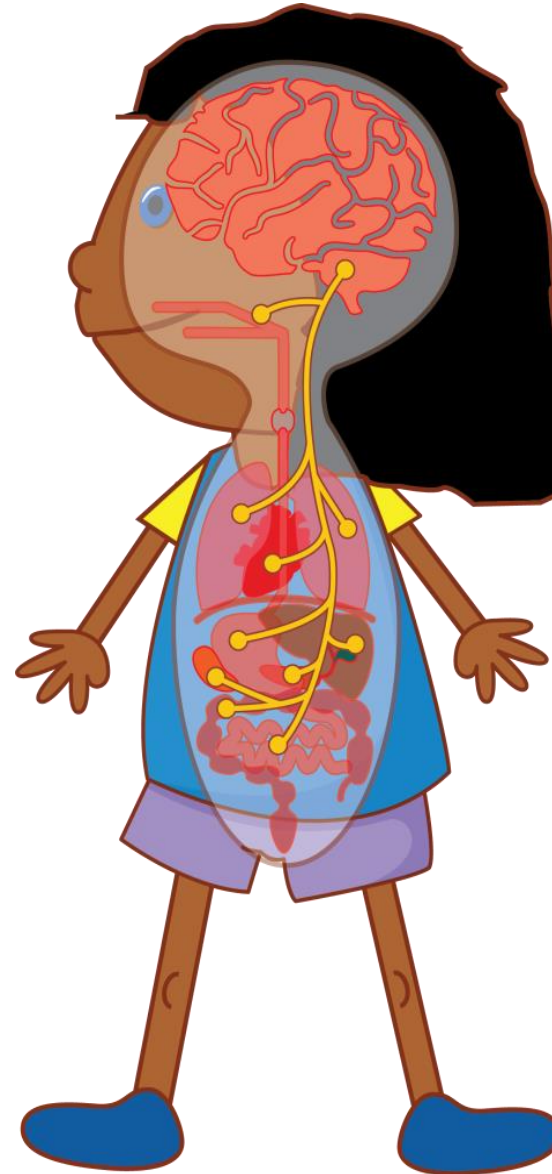
...feeling left out of a
game



Powerful reactions to stress can be difficult to pull back from; they can make us feel bad and they can make those around us feel bad.

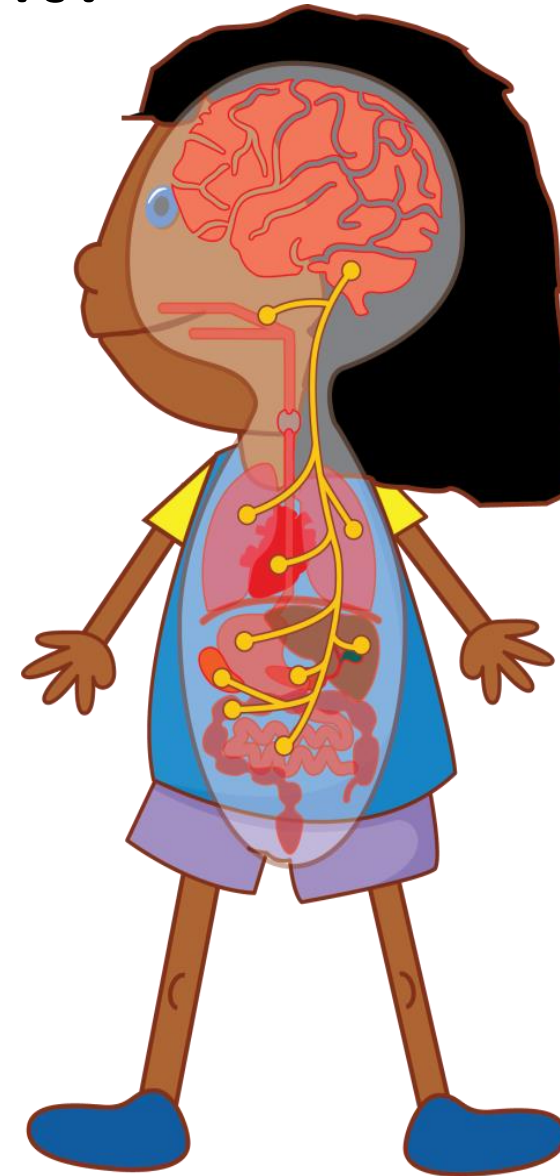
What is the Vagus nerve?

- The vagus nerve is a very long nerve that starts in the brain stem and extends down to other parts of the body.



Why is the Vagus nerve important?

- The vagus nerve plays a major role in regulating (controlling) the heart rate and keeping the gut in working order.
- The vagus nerves also carries information from the internal organs back to the brain.



How can we stimulate the vagus nerve?

Take Notice

- Deep slow breathing
- Relaxing

Connect

- Laughing
- Singing
- Spending happy time with friends and family



Be Active

- Physical activity can help to alleviate difficult feelings.

Healthy Me Activity Poster

www.facts4life.org

Smoothing the Path

Sitting for long periods of time isn't good for our bodies or our brains. Break up sessions of inactivity with a few minutes of moves to help boost energy and mood.



Big moves

Try these when you have room to stand away from furniture. If you have lots of space then you could travel around while doing the moves.



floss



funky chicken



bunny hop



star jumps



shoulder shrug



spot walking



banana banana



punch bag



side step



knees up



sky punch



meatballs

Small moves

Try these when you're sitting on a chair. You don't need much space but be mindful of people sitting near to you.



jazz hands



high reach



weight lifts



trunk twist



wrist wrencher



side benders



Knee pull



toe lift & point



finger span



heel touch



slo-mo march



press and pull

Patterns

Vary the way you use the moves by building patterns of moves.
E.g. funky chicken – high reach – funky chicken – jazz hands – repeat

Challenge

Share your routines with other children.
What difference might it make to how they are feeling?

www.facts4life.org

Move to the beat

Play a bouncy piece of music and move in time to the beat.
Children can take turns to choose a move for the group to perform.
Combine patterns and favourite music tracks to create familiar routines.

Strategies to help stimulate the vagal nerve

| | | |
|--|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Talking about worries to someone you trust* | Taking regular exercise | Watching a good film |
| Meeting up with friends | Doing a job around the house | Listening to uplifting music |
| Gargling! | Doing something you enjoy | Going for a walk |
| Getting enough sleep* | Being mindful | Reading a book |
| Focusing on the positive | Doing a few stretches | Other ideas? |

Strategies to help ourselves feel better

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Helping ourselves to feel better

(Vagal tone and self-regulation)