



Better Conversations

Three Brain State Model

for understanding the different states we find ourselves in.

RED, REPTILIAN or PRIMITIVE BRAIN - located at the top of the spine, it's a part of the brain we share with all reptiles

It's involved with

- Keeping us safe - do I need to run away from this threat or fight it?
- It can immobilise us when we're very overwhelmed by a situation - freeze
- Regulating body temperature, heart rate and hormone production
- Tells us when we need to eat, drink and sleep

Symptoms that tells us it's in action

- Change in heart rate/amplitude
- Change in breathing (deeper, shallower, more or less frequent)
- Feeling hot - flushed skin
- Feeling cold - shivery
- Angry, shouting or roaring
- Wanting to run away
- Hunger, thirst, feeling sleepy
- Adrenaline rush

GREEN, EMOTIONAL or LIMBIC BRAIN - located in the midbrain, it's a part of the brain common to mammals and birds

It's involved with

- Our social relationships with others
- What are the rules here
- Where do I fit in
- What's the structure of this group/community
- Home to emotions and empathy

Symptoms that tell us it's in action

- Questions about clarity, what are the rules, when is lunch/break/can I speak
- Do I feel comfortable in this group/setting?
- Anxiety
- Shame, embarrassment
- Negative self talk - I'm rubbish at this



Better Conversations

BLUE, LEARNING or NEO-CORTEX BRAIN - makes up the outer portion of the brain and is the part that makes us human

It's involved with

- Learning
- Enquiry
- Language
- Logic
- Rational thinking
- Analysis

Symptoms that tell us it's in action

- Happy settled state
- Can learn things
- Can communicate clearly
- Clear thinking and explanations
- Have curiosity

All three parts of the brain are useful at different times. The primitive part finds incredible strength to pull someone out of a burning car. The emotional bit gives us empathy for others and our learning brain enables us to solve complex problems, have warm connected conversations, plan our days ... and we all dip in and out of these states all the time.

Where it becomes tricky is when we become hijacked by our own emotions or are hungry, cold or short on sleep which means we can't access our learning neo-cortex blue brain.

And each of us will have our own behaviours, emotions and feelings that we associate with each of the states and these can be a bit blurry sometimes.

Some ways to remember the colour sequence is to think:

- **Red Earth**, **Green Grass** and **Blue Sky**
- **RGB** - like for TVs or colour references
- The hand model
 - **Thumb** is Red brain
 - **Fingers of same hand** wrapped over thumb is Green brain
 - **Whole of other hand** wrapped over the top is Blue brain