

Weekly Lesson

STAY IN YOUR SANE BRAIN

Sanity is necessary for stability, and stability is necessary for well-being. Trauma destabilizes us. Trauma steals our sanity. It sends shockwaves throughout our entire system. Long after trauma, our minds may fear a repeat, so we stay alert. We are vulnerable to destabilize and lose our sanity just by thinking something bad is going to happen. Our brains fear harm, and fearful thinking alters the way we process information. We misread non-threatening circumstances and misinterpret them as threatening. When we look at life through a lens of past trauma, we look for what fear tells us to look for. Some experts refer to this as “trauma brain.”

Think of your brain as having two parts. One part is a rapid reaction part. It helps us survive by directing a fight, flight, freeze, or fawn reaction. The other part is the “sane brain” or higher-order, slower, think-things-through part. To imagine these two parts, make a fist with one of your hands. Now modify the fist and tuck your thumb in under, not over, your flexed fingers. The thumb represents the rapid-reaction part of your brain. The fingers covering your thumb represent the (slower) thinking part. You might say it’s like a *thinking cap*. When you sense trauma, real or imagined, you “flip your lid” to access the rapid-response part of your brain. To get a sense of this, flip your fingers straight up and keep your thumb tucked into your palm. We call that “flipping your lid” because that is what happens when you perceive a threat. You exit your sane brain to access the survival brain.

This week, notice when you over-react unnecessarily and “flip your lid.” Slow down and figure out what is going on in your mind. Most things in life do not require activation of our survival instincts. We fight when we don’t need to fight. We run (flee) from a situation when staying and talking rationally is the more productive and mature thing to do. We freeze up and don’t say what needs to be said. And some of us, in order to avoid the imagined threat of rejection, do this strange thing of fawning. Fawning is any behavior aimed at soothing or stroking the ego of our abuser hoping for relief of the pain being inflicted. Once aware of your patterns, you can keep your thinking cap down and avoid flipping your lid. Stay in your sane brain. When you truly need the rapid-response part of your brain, it will be there. Improve your ability to accurately assess threat. Sanity is your grounding force. Enjoy the perks of your sane brain. You’ve been through enough and do not need to anticipate threat around every corner. It’s simply not there.

PERSONALIZE THIS LESSON

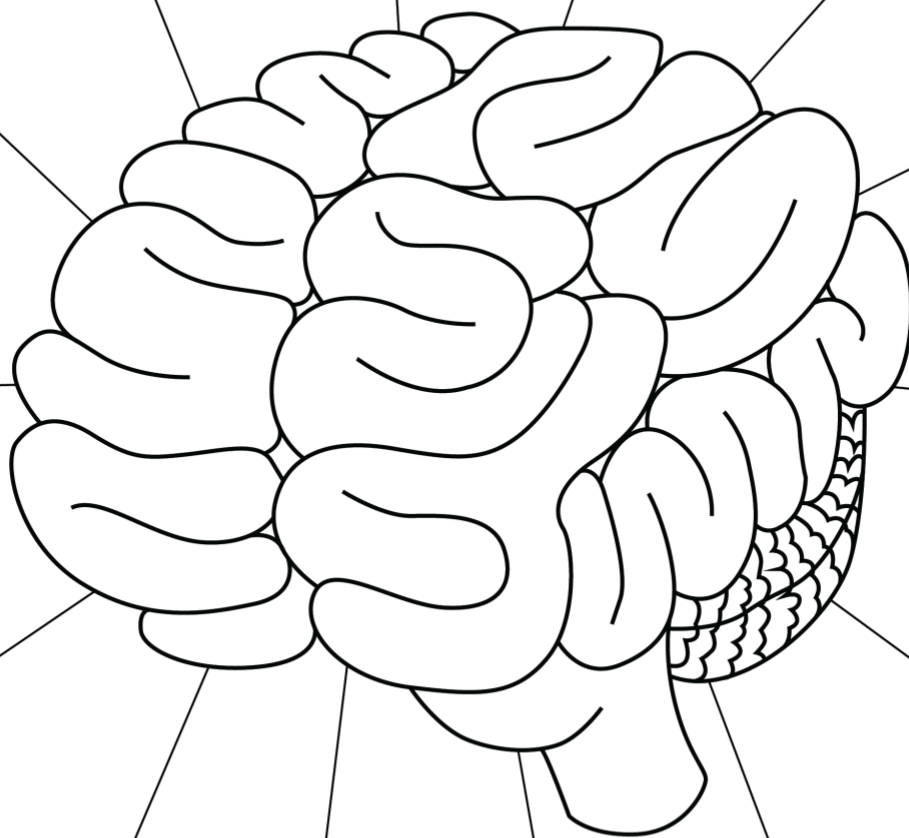
Think: My sanity is my priority. A sound mind is a gift I will not waste. I take my time to make appropriate decisions that benefit me and others.

Feel: I feel sane. I feel logical and linear. I feel rational and reasonable. I feel calm. I feel safe.

Do: Keep your thinking cap on. Focus on the outcome you want. Think things through. Stay sane.

Memorize: For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind (2 Timothy 1:7).

SANE



BRAIN

WEEKLY LESSON: STAY IN YOUR SANE BRAIN

How has trauma stolen your sanity? Describe.

What is one example of you over-reacting and flipping your lid? Describe.

When you feel threatened, are you more likely to freeze, fawn, flee, or fight? Explore this and describe.

How can you make your sanity a priority this week? Describe at least two strategies.

Suggested Song: “Peace be Still” by Hope Darst (Promise Keeper/Set Free, 2020, Fair Trade Services)
