The Brain Smart Start
Tip Sheet

Contents

The Brain Smart Start

Transitions are hard: home to school, center time to clean up time, etc. The Brain Smart Start helps get everyone ready to learn and cooperate. Children (and adults) can only be at their best when they feel safe and connected. The Brain Smart Start's 4 components –Unite, Disengage the Stress, Connect, and Commit – help soothe the brain's safety and connection needs.

- Unite – the goal of this component is to bring the scattered energy of a group into a more cohesive, connected whole. The activity to unite involves everyone (child and adult) in the room moving, chanting, or singing together.
- Disengage the Stress – Stressed people cannot learn. This activity soothes the stress so we can access our higher brain states. Stretching, breathing, and exercising are all good ways to turn off the stress response to maintain optimal learning states for everyone and make connection possible.
- Connect – Connection is critical to learning. Connection activities can be dancing, games, or anything that gets individuals to connect with each other (physically when possible).
  - Connection stimulates the impulse control centers of the brain to facilitate helpfulness and community.
  - Connection activates the attention centers of the brain, enhancing the ability to sustain attention.

- o Connection fosters cooperation. With connection we become willing partners in learning and success.
- Commit – A commitment that is spoken out loud supports success in that commitment. Commitments come from claiming our inner power and declare, "I will do this regardless of what else happens." Commitments can be independent or in a group. Examples are, "Today I'm going to have...
  - o Gentle touches (1-2 and up)
  - o Safe/Walking feet (1-2 and up)
  - o Kind words (2-3 and up)
  - o Listening ears (3-4 and up)
  - o The right to pass (3-4 and up)

Brain Smart Starts is an excellent way to start the day, and the individual components can help smooth many a transition. While it may seem like one more thing to do, getting everyone in their best learning state will actually save you time in your next activities. Brain Smart Starts are excellent for any group activity; classrooms, staff meetings, parent events, etc.

For the Classroom and Center

- Materials Needed:
  1. Family Communication – to be sent out prior to starting the Brain Smart Start (or before any major changes to its use)
  2. Personalized tokens that represent each individual to mark their commitment (optional)
  3. Activity materials (music, video, etc.)
- Steps to Success:
  1. Send out family communication prior to starting or changing the Brain Smart Start. Communicate in as many ways as possible: meetings, letters home, emails, phone, text, etc.
  2. Introduce the concept of the Brain Smart Start in a class, staff, and/or parent meeting.
  3. Explicitly teach the stages of the brain (the Hand Model of the Brain is helpful) and explain that the Brain Smart Start is helpful to get

everyone in a state to be able to learn. Discuss the steps of the Brain Smart Start

4. Do the Brain Smart Start at the beginning of the school day or meeting. Make this a ritual in that it happens every single day. This can also be helpful after big transitions in the day such as after nap time.

5. Use components of the Brain Smart Start throughout the day to raise the energy (Unite and Connect activities) or lower the energy (Disengage the Stress activities) of the group.

Resources

- Creating the School Family: Bully-Proofing Classrooms Through Emotional Intelligence by Dr. Becky Bailey
  - Chapter 8– Beginning the Day the Brain Smart Way
- The Brain Smart Start
  - https://consciousdiscipline.com/free-resources/shubert/shuberts-classroom/brain-smart-start/
  - https://consciousdiscipline.com/free-resources/shubert/reception/brain-smart-start/
  - https://consciousdiscipline.com/ for many videos, articles, and printables.