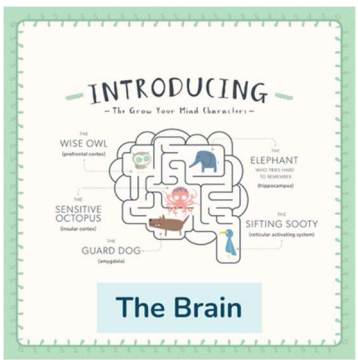
Grow Your Mind at Kapinara Primary School

Building Brains, Belonging and Resilience

At Kapinara Primary School, we proudly teach the **Grow Your Mind (GYM)** wellbeing program. Grow Your Mind supports children to develop **resilience, emotional literacy, respectful relationships and consent education**, using age-appropriate neuroscience and storytelling.

Grow Your Mind helps children understand how their brain works, how emotions influence behaviour, and how they can make positive choices — all through playful, engaging learning. Each month we would like to shine a light on the important messages that we are teaching. So this month we would like to start with….

Learning About the Brain



Grow Your Mind (GYM)

Grow Your Mind builds resilience and supports respectful relationships and consent education. It applies an understanding of neuroscience with storytelling to teach students about their brain.

Animal characters are used to represent the five key parts of the brain to make some basic brain science accessible, relatable & playful to children. This can help them understand their emotions, behaviours, and learning processes.

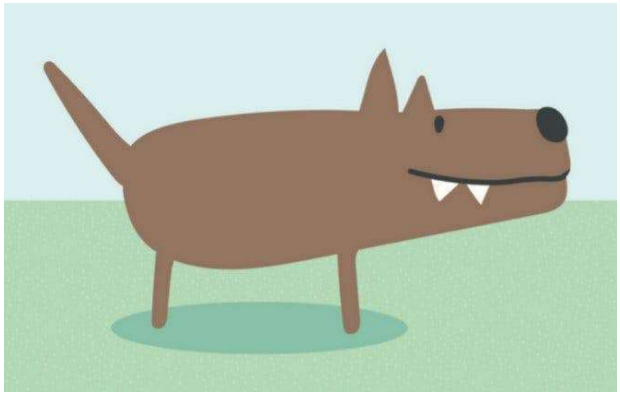
The animals provide purpose to the Grow Your Mind wellbeing content. Teachers can refer to the animals during activities, such as calming our Guard Dog down with a mindfulness exercise. This might help the Wise Owl to wake up and make a good decision about what to do next—or waking up the Sensitive Octopus by naming our emotions to be a kind friend.

Teachers must recognise that each child's brain develops at its own pace. Tailoring support to their developmental stage can enhance their emotional wellbeing and academic success.

All information has been taken from the Grow Your Mind Website with permission from the Grow Your Mind Team. ***Grow Your Mind website(opens in new window)***

Meet the animals of GYM

GUARD DOG (AMYGDALA)



Function: keeping us safe, noticing threats & acting as an alarm system

Main Role:

- The amygdala can detect important changes such as challenges, opportunities, and threats. It is thought to trigger the body's fight, flight, freeze or fawn response.
- It processes emotions such as fear and anger. But also joy too!

Brain Development: Amygdala development:

- In children, the amygdala develops early in childhood and is highly active. This can be why young children might be more prone to intense emotional reactions. They often react first and think later. Helping children label their emotions, practice mindfulness skills & adults modelling emotional management can support it's development.

WISE OWL (PRE FRONTAL CORTEX)

Function: decision making & executive functioning

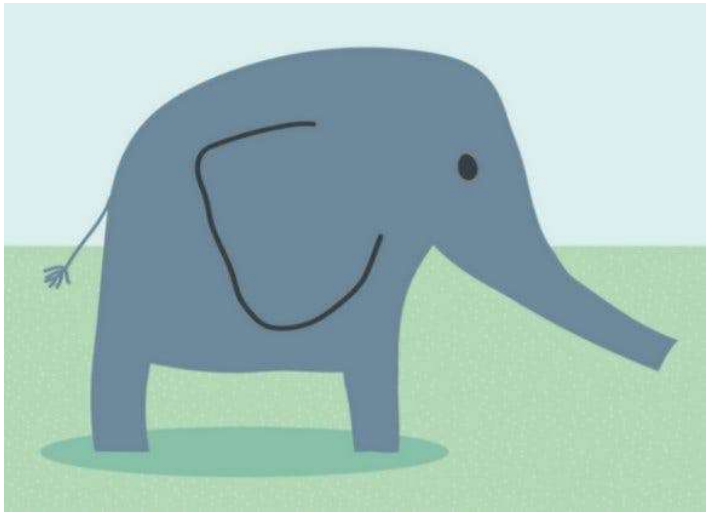
Main Role:

- The prefrontal cortex (PFC) is the brain's rational thinker, responsible for planning, decision-making, impulse control, and social behaviour.
- It helps with making good decisions, understanding consequences, and regulating emotions.

Brain Development: Prefrontal cortex development:

- This is the slowest part of the brain to mature, continuing to develop well into a person's mid-20s. Children and teens rely more on their emotional brain (amygdala) than their rational brain (PFC), which is why they might struggle with self-control.
- Encourage problem-solving and decision-making through scaffolding. Gradually give children more autonomy as their prefrontal cortex develops, helping them weigh options and foresee consequences.

ELEPHANT (HIPPOCAMPUS)



Function: memory & learning

Main Role:

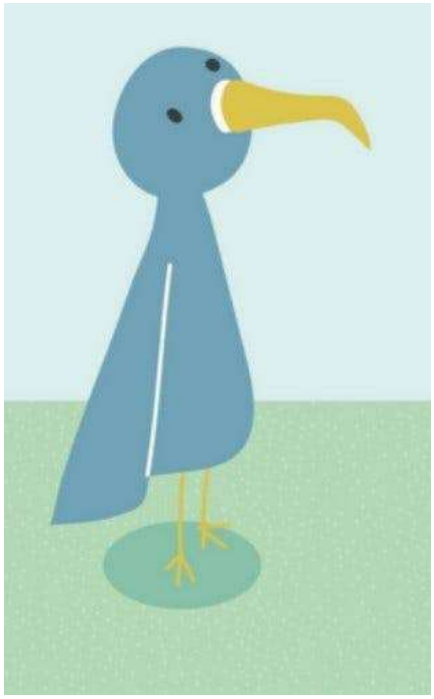
- The hippocampus is involved in forming and retrieving memories.
- It helps us learn new information, navigate, and turn short-term memories into long-term ones.

Brain Development: Hippocampus development:

- The Hippocampus develops rapidly during early childhood, making this time crucial for memory-related learning. Stress and trauma can negatively impact its function, disrupting memory processing.

- Memory consolidation is still a work-in-progress in children, which is why repetition is important in learning. Help children retain information through repetition, storytelling, and active engagement.

SIFTING SOOTY (RAS)



Function: attention & filtering information

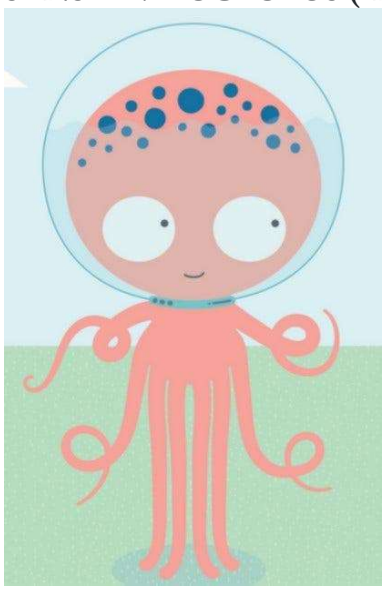
Main Role:

- The RAS acts like a filter, determining which sensory information is important and should be attended to.
- It helps children focus on relevant tasks while ignoring distractions.

Brain Development: Reticular Activating System development:

- The RAS plays a key role in a child's ability to concentrate and filter distractions. It's influenced by novelty, emotional states, and interest.
- Help children through song, play, repetition, keeping it interesting, involving them in learning, tapping into their senses as well as a suite of GYM strategies such as mindful breathing, affirmations & checking in activities.

SENSITIVE OCTOPUS (INSULAR CORTEX)



Function: bodily awareness, processing emotions and sensory experiences
Main Role:

- The insular cortex helps us to understand our feelings and to imagine and predict what others are also feeling.
- It processes internal bodily states and helps link physical sensations to emotions.

Brain Development: Insular Cortex development:

- As the insular cortex develops, children gain better self-awareness of emotions and can link feelings to bodily sensations.
- We can help children tune into their body's signals. Mindfulness activities, like deep breathing or paying attention to the sensation of their heartbeat, can strengthen this connection.