



# Introduction Lesson Plan



Brain Talk  
Therapy Model

## Target Concepts

- The brain is the control center for thoughts, emotions, and behaviors.
- Thoughts, emotions, and behaviors come in varying forms.
- Thoughts, emotions, and behaviors are impacted by the situation or environment in which they occur.

## Background Information

- ✓ The brain is a complex decision-making organ, with multiple drives and impulses competing for control of our attention and actions.
- ✓ Metacognition, or *thinking about our thinking* plays a critical role in successful decision making and learning.
- ✓ Metacognitive awareness is a skill that enables one's ability to respond thoughtfully instead of reacting impulsively.
- ✓ Teaching students how to be more aware of the connections between their thoughts, feelings, and behaviors as they relate to decision-making is a foundational skill in developing metacognitive awareness.

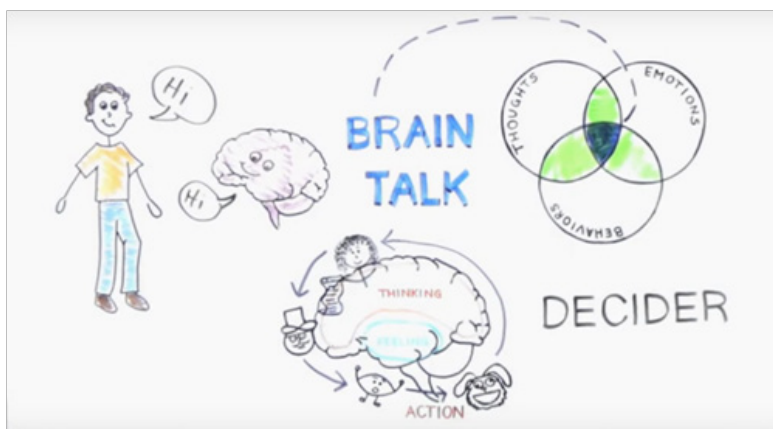
## Primer

This primer activity is designed to prepare students for the lesson by activating known information to scaffold new learning. Students are asked to consider what they know and what they wonder about the brain. The following script is intended to provide a general guide for how you may choose to lead this activity:

- “We are going to be learning and talking about the brain. Let’s make a Know/Wonder Chart to show what we already know and what we wonder about the brain.”
- “What do you know about your brain? Have you ever heard or do you know any interesting facts about brains?”
- “Have you ever wondered about how our brains work? What sort of questions do you have about your brain and the way it works?”

The therapist may use the “Know/Wonder/Learned” instructor primer worksheet as a model to create a KWL chart with the student. The Learned column can be filled in during the discussion following the video.

## Watch Video: Brain Talk





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## Concept One Discussion Points:

The brain is the control center for thoughts, emotions, and behaviors.

- This is the first lesson in a series of lessons to help you get to know your brain and how it works.
- What did you learn about the brain while watching the video? (Add Learned column to Know/Wonder chart)
- What three things does the brain control? (Thoughts, emotions, behaviors)
  - What are different types of thoughts? (Thoughts that just appear versus problem solving thoughts)
  - What are different types of emotions? (Gentle emotions versus strong emotions-see teacher note)
  - What are different types of behaviors? (Reactions versus responses)
- Introduce cognition versus metacognition by exploring the ways in which all human brains are similar and how each person's brain is unique. Help the student identify his/her own learning profile and personal strengths/struggles.

## Concept Two Discussion Points:

Thoughts, emotions, and behaviors come in varying forms.

- We do not refer to emotions as positive or negative since all emotions carry important messages.
  - All emotions have gentle and strong forms.
  - Emotions can be comfortable or uncomfortable. Often uncomfortable emotions alert us to important information in our environments.
  - Begin to expand the student's emotional vocabulary through creation of an emotional "dictionary," personification of emotions, and exploring "shades" of an emotion (i.e., gentle to strong forms of a target emotion) on a 5-Point Scale or 5-shade paint chip.
- Reactions are not inherently problematic. There are situations in which quick reactions and reactive thinking are needed for a safe outcome. Reactions become problematic when a more thoughtful response to a situation is needed.
  - Begin to explore the relationship between triggers and reactions. Help the student begin to identify triggers for common personal reactions.

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## Concept Two Discussion Points (cont.):

- Explore the different forms of thoughts in order to help the student better understand fast, automatic thoughts versus slower, problem-solving thoughts.
  - Watch ASAPScience's Brain Tricks-This is How Your Brain Works: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JiTz2i4VHFw>
  - Complete the Stroop Color Test: [http://www.sciencebuddies.org/Files/3001/2/HumBeh\\_p027\\_StroopWords.pdf](http://www.sciencebuddies.org/Files/3001/2/HumBeh_p027_StroopWords.pdf)
  - Some games are built to capitalize on quick reactive thinking, (Blink, Smack-it, Ratuki) while other games are designed to elicit slower strategic thinking (Connect 4, Set, Rummy). Playing both types of games and identifying which type of thought is activated is a way to explore the idea that each type of thinking is appropriate in the right setting. Introduce some games from both category, play them and decide which type of thinking is helpful for each game.

## Concept Three Discussion Points:

Thoughts, emotions, and behaviors are impacted by the situation or environment in which they occur.

- This curriculum uses the words “behaviors” and “actions” interchangeably. Note that the video uses a Venn diagram to represent thoughts, emotions, and behaviors, while the unit symbol and worksheets use the TEA venn diagram to represent thoughts, emotions, and actions.
- Complete the Situational Awareness Worksheet to help the student identify his/her thoughts, emotions, and actions within a specific situation.
  - Introduce the concept of regulating to one's environmental demands.
  - For advanced students introduce the concept of perspective taking: different people having different thoughts, emotions, and actions in the same environment.
- For advanced students, explore the differences between neutral observations versus judgments about the situation and one's subsequent thoughts, emotions, and actions.

## Taking it Further

This unit is a great introduction for other curricula which invite students/clients to explore thoughts and feelings:

- Self-regulation curricula such as: The Zones of Regulation
- Metacognitive awareness curricula such as: SuperFlex
- Mindfulness curricula such as : MindUp, or Mindful Schools
- Cognitive behavior therapy curricula such as: The Anxiety Workbook for Teens