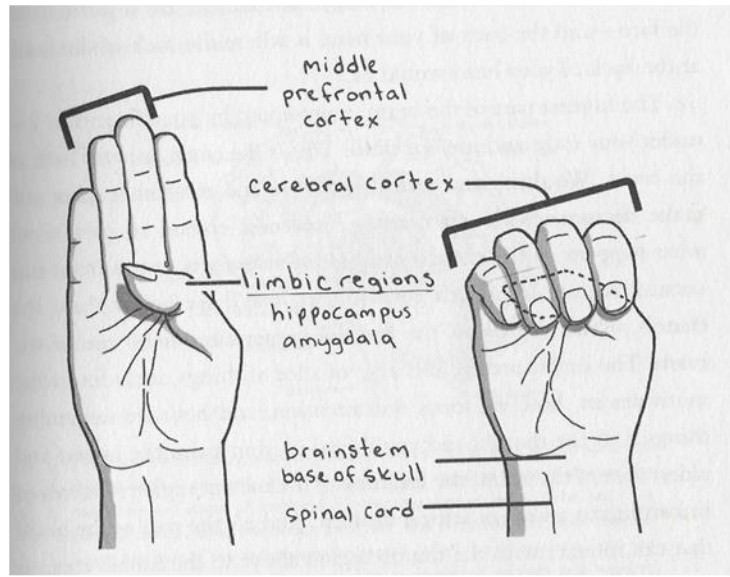


The Healthy Mind Platter



The Healthy Mind Platter for Optimal Brain Matter

Focus Time	When we closely focus on tasks in a goal-oriented way, we take on challenges that make deep connections in the brain. Focus intently on one-thing at a time.
Play Time	When we allow ourselves to be spontaneous or creative, laugh, playfully enjoying novel experiences, we help make new connections in the brain. (creates divergent thinking)
Connecting Time	When we connect with other people, ideally in person, and when we take time to appreciate our connection to the natural world around us, we activate and reinforce the brain's relational circuitry. (gratitude)
Physical Time	When we move our bodies, aerobically if medically possible, we strengthen the brain in many ways.
Time In	When we quietly reflect internally, focusing on sensations, images, feelings and thoughts, we help to better integrate the brain.
Down Time	When we are non-focused, without any specific goal, and let our mind wander or simply relax, we help the brain recharge. No plans, nothing to accomplish, nothing to be done.
Sleep Time	When we give the brain the rest it needs, we consolidate learning and recover from the experiences of the day.



Forebrain	Cortex	We think and reflect, perceive and remember, plan and make decisions with our cortex. Pre-Frontal Cortex coordinates and balances the functions of many areas by linking input from the cortex, limbic area, brainstem, body and social interactions. *Prefrontal Integration: Self-Awareness, Reflection, Planning, Decision Making, Empathy, Morality – thinking about the larger social good. (positive interactions with others and self-reflection build integration)
Midbrain	Limbic Area	Emotion-generation area of the brain that is in charge of what motivates us (reward drive), how we focus our attention, and how we remember things. Includes the amygdala and hippocampus, helps with functions such as emotional balance and memory processes.
	Corpus Callosum	Band of neurons that link the left and right side of the brain to each other and coordinates and balances their activities.
Hindbrain	Cerebellum	Located just behind the limbic area and plays an important role in balancing the body's motions and the interaction of our thoughts and feelings.
Hindbrain	Brainstem	Region that is involved with keeping us awake or letting us sleep. It's the part of the brain that interacts with the limbic area to create reactive states of being angry or scared.

ESSENCE OF ADOLESCENTS

- **ES: Emotional Spark**

Emotional intensity gives an enhanced vitality to life.

- **SE: Social Engagement**

Enhances peer connectedness and creates new friendships. Encourages collective intelligence and collaborative action.

- **N: Novelty**

Increased drive for rewards in the circuits of the brain that create the inner motivation to try something new and feel life more fully, creating more engagement in life.

- **CE: Creative Exploration**

With an expanded sense of consciousness, an adolescent's new conceptual thinking and abstract reasoning allow questioning of the status quo, approaching problems with 'out of the box' strategies and creation of new ideas, and the emergence of innovation.

- Adolescent Remodeling: Pruning: keep connections that are currently used, Myelination: allows for faster, more synchronized flow. Remodeling is energy consuming and during 'construction' certain areas may lose their integrative functioning at times.
 - Honor the ESSENCE of Adolescents, does not mean setting no limits – it means acknowledging the intention behind the actions. Keep the lines of communication as open as they can be.
 - Increased drive for Reward considerations: *Impulsiveness* (behaviours occur without thoughtful reflection), *Addiction* (all behaviours and substances that are addictive involve the release of dopamine – baseline levels of dopamine are actually lower in adolescence – lower troughs, higher peaks) – motivations for use include experimentation, social connection, self-medication and addiction – dopamine surge is released when taking it, planning to take it, thinking about it and being around people with whom it was taken with, getting ready to take it, being in the room it was taken in) *Hyperrationality* (how we think in literal, concrete terms. We examine just the facts of a situation and don't see the big picture. This cognitive process comes from a brain calculation that places a lot of weight on the positive outcome and not much weight on the possible negative results.
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- Encourage the reflection on values and on gut instinct, not simply the inhibition of impulses, is the difference between turning down a compelling impulse and embracing a thoughtful belief and value.
 - Dopamine rises when we work hard at something and finally finish it (creating a painting, learning music, practicing a sport, going for a hike) The key is to discover what our own particular passions are and cultivate them in our lives.

Mindsight / Time-In

Mindsight

- **Insight:** lets you know who you are now, who you've been in the past, and who you'd like to be in the future.
- **Empathy:** enables us to 'see' from the other person's perspective, and to imagine what its like to walk in their mental shoes. (practice: watch people on the street and imagine what they might be experiencing in their minds)
- **Integration:** ability to link different parts of something into an interconnected whole.
- Harmony of Integration: **FACES: Flexible, Adaptive, Connected, Energized, Stable.**

Time-In

- Develop mindful awareness, ways of training the mind that help us develop the ability to be present with what is happening in the moment and letting go of judgments and focus instead on accepting life as it is rather than on how we expect it to be. **research: when we are more present in life, the higher the level of the enzyme telomerase in our bodies, which maintains and repairs the life-preserving ends of our chromosomes and improved immune system function.*
- **SIFTing** our minds as we focus on at least one aspect of our **Sensations, Images, Feelings, and Thoughts.** (gratitude)
- Learning to be present will help us become more resilient. **Resilience** means being flexible and strong in the face of stress, and it is what we need to approach any of the challenges of life and rise above adversity, learn from the experience, and move on with vitality and passion.
- Knowledge of Temperament: **Temperament** includes our sensitivity to input from the environment, the intensity with which we react to inner and outer stimuli – like our own feelings from the inside or sounds or sights from the outside world.
- Tools: **Breath Awareness** **if any particular feeling gets in the way of your focus on the breath, name it to tame it by simply saying something like 'feeling discouraged' or 'feeling anxious' or 'remembering' if your mind is drifting to a moment at the beach and then let the feeling cease to be the focus of your attention by returning to your breath. The key is not to try to get rid of something, like a feeling of discouragement, but rather be open to it, sense it as simply an object of attention, and then let your mind redirect attention to the sensation of the breath. (ironically when we fight what we feel, the feeling gets bigger not smaller) When the memory of some chaotic or rigid time is in the front of your mind, try placing one hand over your heart and one over your abdomen and place a small amount of pressure on each hand for a calming effect.*
Wheel of Awareness
- Focusing attention on your intention, being aware of your awareness, and staying present with a stance of kindness and compassion are the essential elements of time-in practices. Time-In integrates your brain, improves your relationships and strengthens your mind.

Attachment

- **Models of Attachment:** model is shaped by brain-firing patterns, that we summarize across experiences and generate a schema that lets us anticipate what is happening next, how we should behave, what emotions we will have, and how we filter our perceptions. The models we carry with us in our minds are very influential in terms of how we feel, how we think, how we behave, and how we connect with friends, teachers and later on, our romantic partners as we move through our lives. And since we can have more than one model if we've had more than one attachment figure, then each of these brain states, these models, can influence how we behave and react in different situations.
- 2 types of models: **Secure** and **Non-Secure**
- **Secure:** Support our living with flexibility, self-understanding, and ease of connection with others. 4 S's: **Seen:** being seen means that our inner mental life is sensed beneath our behavior, **Safe:** means we are both protected from harm and not terrified by our caregiver. **Soothed:** means that when we are distressed, our caregiver's response makes us feel better. **Secure:** Being seen, safe, and soothed in a reliable way gives an overall sense of security in a relationship.
- Science has shown that secure attachment is associated with the integrative prefrontal functions that include regulating the body, attuning to others and ourselves, balancing our emotions, being flexible, soothing our fears, having insight into ourselves and empathy for others, and having a good grounding in a sense of morality.
- Individuals with secure attachment models generally reflect in a coherent way on the good and bad parts of what may have happened during childhood. State of presence (we are open and accepting to whatever is happening as it is happening) is the hallmark of secure attachment, both in how we connect with others and how we connect with our own life story.

Attachment: Non-Secure (emerge from non-integrative brain function)

- **The Avoidant Model** (~20% of population): Relationship with one or both parents that was filled with repeated experiences of your not being seen or soothed. You learned to minimize your attachment needs. Having this avoidant model as your model for close relationships can potentially lead you to feel disconnected from others and also from your own emotions and needs.
- *Hallmark of an avoidant narrative is that the individual insists that they do not recall anything about family life and that their family life did not influence how they developed. (underdeveloped right hemisphere)
- **The Ambivalent Model** (~15% of the population): Being seen, safe, and soothed does not happen in a reliable way. Your ambivalent model of attachment does not allow you to become soothed as you never know what to expect – she/he is not a reliable safe harbor. And his/her feelings and emotions flood your own inner world as well. You amplify your attachment needs with ambivalence because of the history of intrusiveness and inconsistency.
- *Hallmark of the ambivalent narrative output is a flood of autobiographical details that are not directly related to the questions asked. (overdeveloped right hemisphere) may seem preoccupied with certain experiences from the past.
- **The Disorganized Model**: can occur within the setting of secure, avoidant or ambivalent where you are terrified of an attachment figure. The problem is that it activates 2 different circuits in your brain that don't work together. One is the ancient brainstem circuit that mediates a survival reaction (fight or flight) but the second circuit is the limbic-based attachment system that motivates you if you are terrified to go toward your attachment figure to be protected and soothed. This model results in having a tough time balancing emotions, having good relationships with others, and thinking clearly under stress. More likely to have 'dissociation' – when we dissociate, we dis-associate different aspects of ourselves, such as separating feelings from memories, thoughts from actions – we feel unreal and broken apart.
- *unresolved trauma or loss / movement from implicit memory (emotions,, perceptions, sensations) to explicit (facts, autobiographical recollections) is blocked.
- Reactive Attachment: complete absence of attachment – the best a child can do with the absence of any attachment figure.

Questions for Reflection on Attachment (2 of 2)

- **Emotional Communication**

How do (did) your parents communicate with you when you are (were) happy and excited?

What happens (would happen) when you are (were) distressed, unhappy, injured or ill?

Does (Did) each parent respond with different patterns of connecting to you when your emotions are (were) intense?

How do you communicate with others now when emotions run high?

- **Safe Harbour**

Are (Were) there relationships you can (could) turn to, or places you can (could) go, that you can (could) rely on to help you feel comforted at difficult times? Did such a safe harbour exist when you were a child?

How do you feel those sources of a safe haven affect (affected) your life?

Do (Did) you feel seen, safe, and soothed by your parents?

- **Launching Pad**

How do (did) your parents support your explorations away from them or outside the home?

How are (were) your interests supported by your parents?

Did you feel secure as a child to go out and explore the world?

- **Now**

What is your relationship like now with your parents?

Why do you think your parents act (acted) the way they do (did)?

Do you try to not do things because of how your parents treat (treated) you?

As you reflect on all of these experiences, how do you think they influence the ways you relate to other people?

How do you feel all of these things we have been exploring have influenced who you are now as a person and how you have become the way you are?

- **Future**

What would you wish for yourself in your future relationships?

How do you imagine the experiences from your attachment relationships and early childhood may shape the person you have become?

Are there any factors from your past that are restricting you in the present and limiting who you can be in the future?

What do you see as your 'growth edge' for things you'd like to change in yourself so that you can become freed up to be the person you would like to be in the future?

Any other questions we should have covered or that you may have now?

***Key is to find helpful insights into your own life that you can weave together into a coherent narrative of your own. With our own coherent life story, we'll be more likely to provide the 4 S's of attachment.**

Questions for Reflection on Attachment (1 of 2)

- **Background**

What is (was) it like growing up in your family?

Who is (was) in your family?

What is (was) your parents' philosophy about raising children?

What do (did) or don't (didn't) you like about being raised in your family?

Would you raise (are you raising?) your own children in a similar way, or differently?

- **Relationships**

Do (Did) you get along well with your parents and others in your family?

How do (did) your family members get along with one another?

How have your relationships in your family changed over time?

If you have two parents, how are (were) your relationships with each parent similar or different?

State a few words that reflect your relationship with each parent from your earliest years.

Are there ways you have tried to be like or not like each of your parents?

Are there any others in your life who have served as parenting figures to whom you feel attached? If so, please answer the above questions regarding that person or those persons.

- **Separation**

Can you remember your first time being separated from your parents? What was that like and how did it affect you and your parents?

Did you ever experience a long separation from your parents in childhood? What was that like for you and for your parents?

- **Discipline**

What ways do (did) your parents respond to your behaviors to teach you how to behave?

Do (Did) your parents use punishment in their discipline?

How have these strategies of being disciplined influenced your development?

- **Fear and Threat**

Have you ever felt threatened by your parents?

Have you ever felt rejected by your parents?

Have there been any other experiences that may have been overwhelming in your life? What were these, and how do you feel they have influenced your life?

Do any of these experiences feel like they are still very much alive in your life now?

- **Loss**

Has anyone significant in your life died?

Has anyone significant in your life left?

What impact have these losses had on you and your family?

How do these losses affect you now in your life?

Time-Between and Reflective Conversation (Creating Presence & Connection)

- Relationships in which you feel felt by another person – when you sense that your internal world, your mind, is taken in by another and respected – are the building blocks of health.
- In reflective conversations each person can share what they are feeling, thinking, remembering, hoping, dreaming, believing, or perceiving. These conversations connect us to one another so that we can feel felt and seen – so that we can feel authentic and real. Reflective conversations are respectful (we honour differences between ourselves and others) and kind (we honour and support one another's vulnerabilities, creating a safe place where we can open up in an authentic way) and allow us to resonate with someone, we come to feel their feelings at the same time as we become more aware of our own. (let someone's feelings enter us and change us)
- ***Reflective Conversation Practice:** Think of a person who you feel brings out the best in you. Let the way you two interact fill your awareness. (SIFT, gratitude) Now think of another person who brings out the worst in you. Reflect on the nature of your communication with that person. (what would you do differently that would be more inline with reflective conversation and integration). You can always choose how to be in your relationships with others.
- **PART** of healthy relationships: **Present, Attune, Resonate**, and create **Trust**.
- **Repairing Ruptures:** As a parent it is our duty to reflect on such ruptures and make the effort to repair and reconnect after we've apologized for our contribution to the conflict.
- **Flipping our Lid:** sometimes our lower limbic, brainstem, and bodily areas directly influence our behaviors without the intervening prefrontal filtering or calming influences.
- **Steps to reconnect:** you can state that you'd like to reconnect and when its time, you can find a quiet place to engage in reflective dialogue. Listen to what is being said, don't judge. Being open to the other person is essential to let the person feel felt and for you to truly understand what might be going on. One of the hardest elements may be to let go of the notion that you are right, and the other person is wrong. Listen, take in the other person's perspective, and realize that understanding each other is the road to reconnection. When its time, you can share in a non-judgmental way your own experience, using 'I' language like 'I felt that...' or "I thought that..." rather than 'You made me feel...' or 'You didn't do...' Letting each person in the dialogue space to express and be heard is essential.