



BRAIN DEVELOPMENT + DECISION MAKING 201

Activity: Evaluating OTC Neurotransmitters

These days, a lot of neurotransmitters are sold as supplements. Why is this? How are they marketed? Do they even work? This activity is designed to help students connect their new knowledge of brain development with information from the [Fad Diets, Supplements, + Self-Care](#) lesson to deepen their understanding of both.

Directions:

1. Take about 15 minutes and have students work in pairs to answer the following questions:
 - a. Can you think of any neurotransmitters sold as supplements over-the-counter? If so, which ones? If not, take a few minutes to research what is available.
 - i. Examples include acetylcholine (ACH), magnesium, dopamine, serotonin, melatonin, and many more!
 - b. List at least 3 of the claims you have heard about these supplements
 - Examples include: they help with sleep, mood, focus, and pain.
2. Assign each pair a neurotransmitter or allow them to pick their own. Invite students to research this neurotransmitter and answer the following questions about it together:
 - a. What does this supplement claim to do?
 - b. Is it inhibitory or excitatory? How does this relate to the promises it makes on the bottle?
 - c. How do you know if the claims on the bottle are legitimate?
 - d. Would you consider purchasing this supplement? Why or why not?
3. If time allows, have the pairs share out their responses with the rest of the class
4. Conclude the activity with a reminder that supplements are not regulated by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and may not be safe for developing minds and bodies (or for adults, for that matter!)

Check out our lesson on [Fad Diets, Supplements, + Self-Care](#) to learn more.