



BRAIN DEVELOPMENT + DECISION MAKING 201

Activity: How To Hack Your Limbic System

Limbic system dominance isn't the whole story. The key to making smart decisions is to give your brain time for signals to reach the prefrontal cortex. This gives your brain a chance to weigh in and have a say in your decision.

When making a decision, think about both the short term and long term consequences. It can be helpful to think through the potential pros and cons of a choice, and how the decision aligns with your personal values. It only requires a few extra seconds to join the party.

Directions:

1. Have students partner up in pairs
2. Take a minute or two for each student to individually make a list of 3 ways they currently buy themselves time when they're in a tough spot
3. Then have students list 3 NEW things they'd be interested in trying that might slow down their decision making. Remind them that there are no bad answers – it's all about finding what works for them!
 - a. Here are some examples if students need a little extra help brainstorming:
 - i. Take a few deep breaths
 - ii. Go to the bathroom
 - iii. Get a drink of water
 - iv. Doodle a picture
 - v. Take a short walk
4. Have students share their responses with their partner
5. Allow the partner to offer up additional suggestions or strategies for the other person to try
6. Finally, as a whole class, work together to rank the top 10 strategies for buying yourself time. Consider writing them out and posting them in the classroom.
7. Wrap up the activity with a concluding statement, such as, "The next time you are faced with a decision, such as overspending at your favorite store or getting into a car with someone who has been drinking, use these strategies to buy your brain time to make a thoughtful choice."