

## MEET THE BRAIN FRIENDS!

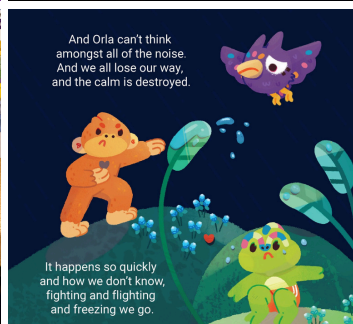
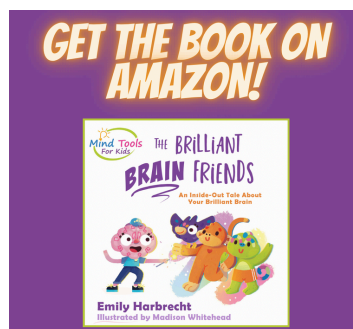
*"Super energetic, very passionate, empathetic and supportive! MTFS really know their stuff!"* Natasha Wissanji, Pastoral Lead

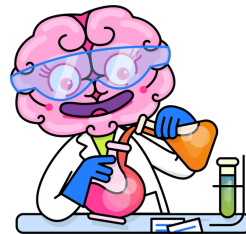
Mind Tools For Schools presents The Brain Friends, an evidence based psychoeducation programme teaching children from reception to year 6 how to regulate, relate and reason. A spiral curriculum, supporting emotional development that fits effortlessly into the school day. The Brain Friends programme strengthens the schools emotional literacy offer to develop an inclusive culture around wellbeing for the whole school community.

This whole school approach supports children to thrive socially and academically. Meet Lenny, Milo, Orla and of course, Brilliant Brain! The Brain Friends programme uses characterisation to create simple and memorable ways to help children understand the mind-body connection, develop their self-regulation, ability to label emotions and to engage in learning.

We deliver

- Coaching and training for teachers to help them integrate the model into their setting.
- Activities, lesson plans and a suite of resources for children to use in the classroom and home.
- Webinars and supportive training sessions for parents, carers and the community around the school.
- Bespoke solutions and consultancy around the 8 principles of Public Health England's Whole School Approach model





# A WHOLE SCHOOL APPROACH

## The Brain Friends in Schools

The Brain Friends are fully aligned to the core PHSE curriculum themes and learning objectives for Key Stage 1 and 2. The Brain Friends programme increases social and emotional development for all children including those with neurodivergence.



*'We integrate **your school's values** into the programme as they act as the 'compass' of the school. Our Whole School approach considers not only a comprehensive model of wellbeing but also the impact of each level. The environment, behaviours, skills, capabilities and values all shape the school's identity.*

*"A whole-school approach involves all parts of the school working together and being committed. It needs partnership working between senior leaders, teachers and all school staff, as well as parents, carers and the wider school community" Mentally Healthy Schools.*

## The Brain Friends in the classroom and evidence

The core programme is designed to engage children in the Brain Friends model in one short, interactive session per week. The characterisation helps children to understand their brain as they learn about Lenny, Milo and Orla from the bottom up approach. The central themes stay the same as the children progress through each school year, with age appropriate adaptation within the material to include growth mindset and neurochemistry ,

The Brain Friends approach is based around Perry's Neurosequential Model: Regulate, Relate and Reason. We need to progress through the 3 R's in this specific sequence to get back to a regulated state. Children learn to understand the needs of their brain stem, what regulation feels like and how to communicate their needs through this trauma aware approach.

Sessions can be delivered face to face by MTFS or teacher led via our remote delivery platform. Our online portal has everything you need. It hosts the recorded sessions, teachers briefs, printable and development activities. It also tracks progress and feedback.

## The MTFS Approach

- Each Brain Friends module is progressive, building on knowledge, skills and understanding
- Age-appropriate sessions from Reception to Year 6.
- Integrated with PHSE curriculum
- Teacher videos and guides to support implementation
- Additional activities to support the integration of knowledge and skills.

## Supporting teachers

Teacher led lessons are pre prepared and recorded to make delivery as easy as possible. Each lesson provides children with an opportunity for an immersive experience of how their brain works. This could be through creating a playdough brain, understanding stress responses or matching their very own Brain Friends Power Cards.

We offer coaching, training and resources to help teachers use the Brain Friends model in the daily running of their classroom and support senior leaders in embedding the model within the culture of the school.

## Parents

Parents can access helpful downloads, video briefs and webinars to help them implement the Brain Friends model of regulate, reason, reflect at home. We know that by working together we can help the children integrate their new skills in all areas of their life.

## MIND TOOLS FOR YOUR SCHOOL

My Brain pumps  
adrenalin when I am  
in fight or flight. I can  
feel it in my hands  
and feet.  
Ralph age 8

A PET is a positive,  
empowering thought.  
I feed my PETs  
positive affirmations.  
Thea age 9

My Milo Monkey  
helps me to name my  
feelings and notice  
where they are in my  
body. Nancy age 5

Regulation means  
you are in a good  
state and can handle  
life's challenges.  
Ethan, age 10

I recycle my ANTs  
into PETS by thinking  
of what advice I  
would give my best  
friend.  
Jasper, age 10

My Orla Owl needs my  
body and emotions to be  
in a good space.  
Sydney, age 10

My Lenny Lizard  
needs water, food,  
sleep and for me to  
be active and off my  
ipad.  
Caitlyn, age 10

When my Lenny is  
dysregulated I can't think  
properly. I know I need  
water and to move my  
body!  
Akshaj - age 10

**The Brain Friends Programme** gives children understanding and awareness. It gives them the tools and knowledge to make the connection between their thoughts and feelings in their mind and body. It empowers them to interpret and understand their nervous system. It normalises making the connection with what they are feeling on the inside and helps them utilise strategies to change how they show up on the outside.

To find out more about The Brain Friends or the Junior Coach Training, email  
[emily@mindtoolsforkids.com](mailto:emily@mindtoolsforkids.com)



# MEET THE BRAIN FRIENDS!



Meet The Brain Friends: Lenny, Milo, Orla and of course, Brilliant Brain! The Brain Friends programme uses characterisation to create simple and memorable ways to help a child develop their self-regulation, ability to label emotions and to engage in learning.

Children enjoy learning about the relationship between their body, emotions and thinking brain by associating them with each character. They learn to tend and tame each character in sequence in order to regulate and develop self-awareness.

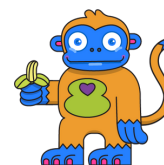
## Lenny Lizard

Lenny lizard lives in the brainstem. He runs the body and is in charge of our basic survival instincts. He lives downstairs with his brain friend Milo Monkey. When his needs are met and he is functioning well, he keeps our body calm and relaxed. We call this being regulated. When his needs aren't met he becomes dysregulated.



## Milo Monkey

Meet Milo Monkey lives in the limbic system. He runs our emotions and helps to keep us safe from harm. He looks after the amygdala - our body's alarm system which sends us into FIGHT, FLIGHT, FREEZE and our Hippocampus that manages our memories. When his needs are met and he is functioning well, he keeps our feelings balanced and our bodies calm. He lives downstairs with his brainstem friend Lenny Lizard.



## Orla Owl

Orla lives in the Pre Frontal Cortex area of the brain. She loves to think, learn, process and use language to communicate. When her needs are met she helps her friends Lenny and Milo to express themselves. She lives in the upstairs brain and has a creative and a logical side to her. When she isn't working well she flies away which makes it difficult to think and learn.



## Brilliant Brain

Brilliant Brain helps children to learn that their brain can develop and grow. It is plastic and learns by repetition and practice. He helps the children to look after their brain friends so that they can discover, create and be curious about the world around them.

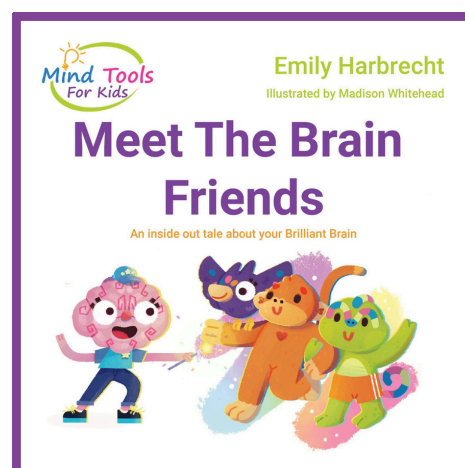


*"Signs of dysregulation can be found on the face—wide eyes, looking around the room, looks of anger, surprise or disgust, body gestures, needing to move, perhaps pushing or hitting, etc. Those are signs of sympathetic NS (nervous system) activation." Dr Delahook, author Beyond Behaviors*

MTFS use a variety of resources to teach the concept to children ranging from posters, feelings cards, assemblies, pre-recorded video trainings for kids and teacher led activities. **There is also a short story book available on Amazon!**

The Brain Friends concept is not just for children. The concept also helps adults to reflect on their own needs and wellbeing. It encourages staff to reflect on the age-appropriate expectations of children that are neurodivergent and demonstrating unmet needs.

The Brain Friends model supports these areas by identifying the child's basic needs, through giving them the language and a way of expressing their emotions and through aiding the development of their pre frontal cortex.





# THE EVIDENCE AND ORIGINS

## The Evidence

The Brain Friends approach helps children to identify their bodily sensations through raising their awareness of interoception. The characterisation helps children to differentiate and also link together the sensations inside their body, their emotions and the tools they can use to reflect and reason.

Interoception gives us the ability to sense what is happening inside our bodies. From being aware of our heartbeat, hunger and even whether we need the toilet, it is also closely linked with emotional regulation.



Every emotion we experience is linked to a specific sensation inside the body. Nervous or anxious feelings are often described as 'knots in the stomach' or as having 'butterflies'. And the reaction to shock or stress, 'my heart skipped a beat'. These sensations that we feel inside the body are signals of interoception.

When children can understand, identify and effectively process the sensations inside their bodies, they have a better ability to use emotional regulation techniques. This helps them to better manage situations where they may have previously had unhelpful emotional reactions.

The Three R's: Reaching The Learning Brain. Dr Bruce Perry, a pioneering neuroscientist in the field of trauma, has shown us that to help a vulnerable child to learn, think and reflect, we need to intervene in a simple sequence. The Brain Friends is based around Perry's Neurosequential Model: Regulate, Relate and Reason. We need to progress through the 3 R's in this specific sequence to get back to a regulated state.

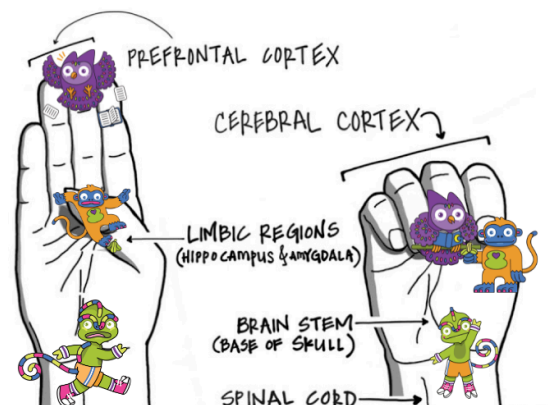
First Regulate: We must help the child to regulate and calm their fight/flight/freeze responses.

Second Relate: We must relate and connect with the child through an attuned and sensitive relationship.

Third Reason: We can support the child to reflect, learn, remember, articulate and become self-assured.

Heading straight for the 'reasoning' part of the brain with an expectation of learning, will not work well if the child is dysregulated and feeling disconnected from others.

Daniel Siegel's Hand Model of the Brain explains how we can use the frontal cortex (logical part) in our brains to train ourselves, with practice, to moderate the fight/flight/freeze/appease reaction which is our impulsive, knee-jerk reaction to threat. The hand model of the brain refers to the 3 key areas that we use in characterisation – the brainstem, limbic region and cortex. We incorporate this when explaining the relationship between The Brain Friends when regulated and dysregulated.



## The Brain Friends and other Emotional Literacy Aids

The Brain Friends integrates well with existing emotional literacy offers. The Brain Friends model seeks to provide teachers, children and parents with the education and understanding required to fully achieve a whole school, regulated learning environment. Emotional literacy works at the skills and capabilities level of a wider scope of integration.