

Decode your child's brain

Welcome to your second module!

The first module was mostly about YOU. In the second and third modules, we're moving onto your child.

In this module you'll:

- learn how to understand your child's brain so you can parent to your mama vision;
- observe and learn how to read your child's brain states and understand why they have the behaviours they do;
- learn how to respond to your child in each of their brain states to be deeply connected and give them what they really need.

Here we go ...

Have you ever stood in front of your child and said: "What on earth is going on in your head?"

You may have said to yourself: "I just don't get you! Why don't you understand? It seem we're from two different planets!"

Let's face it. You're dealing with tantrums, meltdowns, incessant crying, whingeing, whining, and resistance in many different shapes and forms.

What can you DO when this happens and nothing seems to work?

Maybe you've tried to reason. Maybe you've tried smacking and became upset at yourself wishing that you hadn't. Or maybe you've felt helpless and done **nothing**: you ignored their behaviour and your child has escalated to being completely out of control. You **knew** you could have done **something** but you didn't know **what**!

With any of these scenarios you may have ended up with the feeling of dread in your stomach and worried that you couldn't seem to get it right.

Does this sound familiar?

Let's just stop here. First of all I want you to know how **normal** this is. It's so human and real and common to most mothers. And I want to give you a big mama hug to reassure you that you're not alone. I **know** you're doing your best, and this is some of the toughest stuff you'll ever deal with in your life!

What I **love** about you is that we're actually having this conversation. That you care enough to even think

about this stuff.

What's different about you is you're interested in doing it differently. You want to change it up from the old paradigm – the old-school way - where the focus was mostly on changing **behaviour** only.

You know that there's more. Your heart aches for the connection. To feel really good about how you're doing this mother gig. Deep down you want your child to admire you, that as a teenager they'll come to you with their problems, and as adults will want to have you as a big part of their lives.

You want to **feel good** about discipline because you know it becomes part of the relationship you're building together.

Maybe you've heard that in this new paradigm – the modern way to parent – that discipline is more about **modelling and learning in the context of this mother-child relationship**.

This is how your child will develop the inner treasure chest of skills you want them to have.

Our society is in transition from the old paradigm to the new one so it's not surprising that many of you have conflicting messages coming at you thick and fast about what is the best way to raise a child.

“Do it this way.”

“No don't. It's bad for your child.”

One expert says one thing but another says the opposite. Who do you trust? It's so confusing!

The answer is to learn to trust your own intuition. To develop a mindset and skill set that allows you to parent from your heart in a way that best suits your individual child.

That's what being an Intuitive Mother is all about – tapping in to your inner knowing in order to communicate with your child in a way that works for both of you.

This requires the Mama Vision from your last module, but also an understanding of your child's brain and how it affects his or her behaviour, so you can parent in alignment with your vision.

When you understand what's going on in his or her little head, you are able to understand why they have the behaviours they do.

Being aware of your **own** brain states and how you react to your child's is also critical here.

In the first part of this module you'll become an observer. You'll be an onlooker in your own household, taking notes of what you see your child doing and how you respond in each of their brain states. You'll get clever at understanding how to read brain states and decode your child's behaviour.

Then in the second part of this module, as we build on this knowledge and discuss strategies of how to approach your child when they're in the different brain states, and how to make conscious and powerful choices moment to moment with whatever happens.

You'll get to be an Intuitive Mother in action!

The benefits are significant and so important. You'll be giving your child more of what they need for skill-building and emotional well-being, investing in your relationship with them, and wiring their brain towards positive behaviours as opposed to misbehaviour and unnecessary meltdowns.

As a foundation for ALL of this you'll need to be incorporating the embodiment practices which we'll go over now.

EMBODIMENT PRACTICES FOR YOUR CHILD

These practices will form the core foundational skillset your child needs from you. Even though most of children's development happens without you actually teaching them, such as growing in the womb, crawling and walking, there is an area of development that cannot happen without them being in relationship with you or another significant caregiver.

A healthy attachment and emotional intelligence are developed by nurturing connection with the body, and attunement to feelings and thoughts. This is the area of development that needs YOU and your modelling to fully wire up your child's brain.

The embodiment practices are the skills to do this. They literally develop your child's brain and help them have all those gorgeous inner qualities like empathy, confidence, flexibility and compassion. It helps them understand, know and like themselves which in turn enables them to build good relationships with others and have the capacity to pursue their passions and intellectual pursuits.

You may already be doing a lot of this with your child. These practices will help you go deeper and really 'nail it'. The latest science tells us that we not only need to help our children with their thoughts and their feelings, but go that step further and help them with their body wisdom as well.

The three practices are: Body-fullness, Heart-fullness and Thought-fullness. I have created these names to capture the meaning in a way that is easy to learn and embody.

Part 1- Body-fullness

Notice what's happening with your child. What is their body saying? What is it communicating?

Help them to notice by noticing yourself.

"You're crying"

"You're hiding away"

"You have a big frown on your face"

"I notice your fists are clenched"

"You have a big smile on your face"

"I notice your eyes are red and your body is jittery after so much screen time."

Then after awhile your child will be able to do this naturally themselves with some practice.

They may say things like:

"I have butterflies in my tummy"

"I've got a lightness or balloon in my chest"

"My body wants to jump!"

Part 2 – Heart-fullness

Help your child notice how he or she is feeling. Make an empathic guess at what emotion they are experiencing?

“It looks like you’re sad”

OR

“You’ve got big strong feelings.”

“Are you feeling angry about that?”

“I can see you feel left out”

or more generally: *“You’re having a hard time.”*

See if you can feel into his feelings and at the same time not lose your own sense of self. Your face and tone of voice will mirror his feeling back to him (that helps develop his brain).

Give him a sense that what he is feeling is ok. Say things like:

“It’s ok to have a big feeling like that. There is no such thing as good and bad emotions - they’re natural and ok. I can handle all your emotions. I am with you. I am bigger, stronger, wiser and kind.”

Part 3 – Thought-fullness

Connect with what he is thinking. You might ask or have an empathetic guess.

“Are you thinking you don’t want to play anymore? That you want to go home?”

“Are you thinking mummy won’t come back?”

Even in that pre-verbal first year or so it’s a good idea to start practicing at guessing what they’re thinking and saying it out loud, as it becomes increasingly important as they grow.

We do all three of these embodiment practices with your child to help them fully integrate their brain and enable them to be the best version of themselves. Best brain development is achieved by focussing on and linking up body, heart and thoughts. This means that they have greater access to developing their body intelligence, emotional intelligence and well as their mental intelligence. You are nurturing a multi-intelligent child!

Imagine your child growing up to be confident and aware of who they are, warm and compassionate in relationships, be able to pursue their intellectual passions with vigour, and have a strong body intuitive wisdom to be able to make healthy decisions.

There are so many applications and ways to use the embodiment practices depending on your child’s age, your own parenting style, and your child’s uniqueness. Play with it, and adapt it to your changing situation.

An example of a child who’s had a lot of screen time might be:

“I notice that your voice is high-pitched and your body is a bit jumpy. I wonder if you’re feeling irritable?”

Wait and see if they respond to your question. If they do, you might ask:

“I’m wondering if that extra screen time made you feel that way. What do you think?”

The three practices can be used in any order. Sometimes you’ll use one, and at other times all three.

Take it a bit further

You may like to introduce your child to the use of their breath to help her calm her body, mind and thoughts and bring herself (or himself) into the ‘now’ moment. It’s from this place that she can access her intuition, have authentic responses and make decisions aligned with her truth and understanding.

Show her how to put one hand on her belly and notice how her breath makes it rise and fall. She can put her other hand on her heart and be quieter, to sense and maybe even hear her heart beating.

To reinforce the embodiment practices, you can watch [this short video](#).

DECODE YOUR CHILD'S BEHAVIOUR WITH BRAIN STATES

Thanks to the latest neuroscience research and findings, we know so much more about your child's brain. To me it's fascinating and so exciting. Now we're understanding more and more about how different brain states affect your child's body and behaviours, mood and emotions, as well as the quality of their thoughts.

With all the latest information we have more tips and tricks to get the best results for your child, and to give you a roadmap to follow for effective parenting.

Before we jump right into HOW to do this we first need to understand brain states, and acknowledge how there are developmental changes as your child grows.

The brain has three main parts which can be likened to the traffic light system. It's a very simplistic model although a very helpful way of viewing the parts of the brain. (I'd like to acknowledge world-leading expert Dr. Daniel Seigal and Carrie Contey who have influenced this section).

REPTILE Brain {RED} - all about survival, the oldest part of the brain.

This is the only part of the brain that is wired at birth. Moment-to-moment, 24-hours a day, it is constantly scanning the internal and external environment to check: "am I safe or not safe?"

Our reptilian brains keep us alive. It's the part of our brain that is in charge when we're stressed and overwhelmed. This is the lowest part of our brain, and when we're in this brain state, we're "in the red", or "in our animal brain".

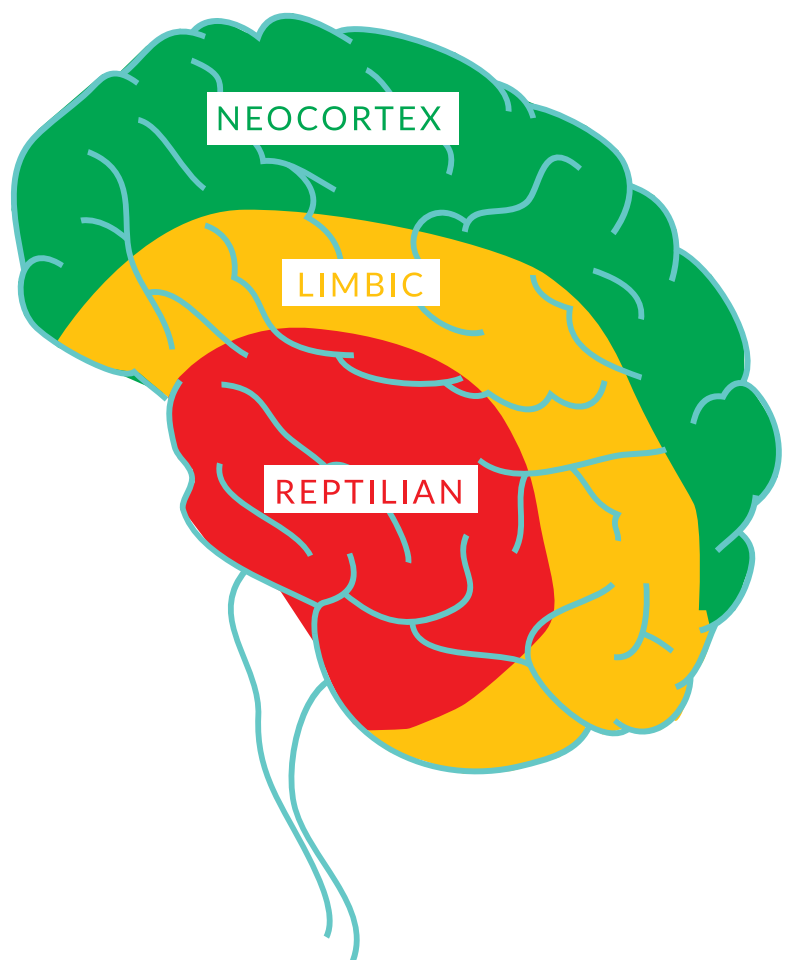
LIMBIC or MAMMAL Brain {YELLOW} - at six weeks after birth the mammal brain starts to wire up.

This is the part of the brain where it's all about emotions, connection, feeling understood or misunderstood, seen and valued, or neglected. This part of the brain allows for a little person to create an attachment (healthy relationship) to his or her caregivers, and it's why babies begin to smile at about this time.

This part of the brain is mostly non-verbal. It responds a lot to your body language, tone of voice, touch and the ability to be present and 'with'.

HUMAN Brain or Neocortex {GREEN} - at about one year old, it starts to wire.

This is the juicy part where language, rational thought, learning new information, creativity, intuition,



empathy and compassion wire up. It's the higher-functioning part of the brain which is active when we're calm, relaxed and able to think clearly and perform at our best.

What's happening developmentally?

Babies arrive and can't do anything for themselves. They need us to care for their bodies and their emotions. In only three short years a massive growth happens. By this time they're actually doing most things. They're running around, talking, making jokes, telling stories and so on. It's incredible. How is this even possible? It's all because of development in the brain.

For the first year of life babies are mostly operating from red and yellow brain states.

Up to seven years-old children continue to operate in their red and yellow brain states as they begin to grow the green part of their brain.

It's not until the age of around 25 years-old that the foundational brain wiring is complete and they have an 'adult brain'.

Hopefully this will help you have a deeper understanding of your little person. Often mothers are able to be more compassionate with themselves and with their child when they can reframe the challenges with the understanding that their child's brain is "just not fully wired up yet".

What we know is that all three parts of your child's brain are operating on and off at different parts of the day. This information will help you navigate the way you interact with them.

As an intuitive mother you'll have an individualised approach, and even though you'll be getting a clear roadmap here, you'll also notice that this approach supports you to be flexible and adaptable to changing situations moment-by-moment, day-by-day, in accordance with your personality and your child's uniqueness.

How does your child act in each part of the brain?

Now its time to find out what your child looks like, sounds like and acts like in each part of the brain states. Below are some of the different behaviours you might see when you child is in each of the three brain states. You might have some of your own to add – use them in the observation exercise coming up below. In order to parent like a mama goddess, you'll need to be able to meet your child where he or she is at. That's why understanding these brain states is important.

HUMAN – Green Brain: relaxed and easy-going, using language, thinking, is compliant, happy to do what you ask, funny and delightful, loving

LIMBIC/MAMMAL- Yellow Brain: whining, clinging, not listening, resisting, bossy, speeding up, nervous laughing, crying, everything's NOT right.

REPTILE/ANIMAL – Red Brain: full-on fight or flight. tantrums, kicking, biting, screaming, hitting , spitting, fighting, aggression OR shutting down, running away, avoiding eye contact, freezing, collapsing, meltdown.

So in the new paradigm you can read what part of the brain your child is in to determine how you'll respond! (Red, Yellow or Green)

Exercise:

First of all you need to be observant and curious about your child's behaviour so that you can begin to recognise when your child is in each of these brain states- the Red, the Yellow and the Green. This will later help you to learn how to catch your child as they slide from an upper brain state to a lower one, giving you the opportunity to positively intervene. And you might notice how your child can move from a lower brain state to an upper brain state and you can learn to develop interventions that can help this happen.

You'll also be observing your own brain states and how this affects your response to your child's brain state.

The **OBSERVE YOUR CHILD play sheet**, included in this module, helps you chart your observations of your child. Included is a section for charting your own responses, feelings and brain states to observe and record as well.

Download the **OBSERVE YOUR CHILD play sheet**, do the exercises and report back your findings to **The Village Facebook group**.

HOW TO RESPOND TO YOUR CHILD'S BRAIN STATES

Now that you've observed your child's brain states and how they act during each of them, you have a new understanding of him or her. From here you can take that understanding to connect with and help your child, and to be more like the mother you set in your vision. Using neuroscience as a guide, you can approach each of your child's brain states with a different strategy. For example, when your child is in the RED brain you'll respond with minimal talking, whereas when they're in the GREEN brain, you'll utilise this time for teaching new skills. You'll be able to read your child's ever-changing brain state throughout the day and respond in a more attuned and appropriate way. You'll notice your responses are more fluid, connecting and relationship enhancing.

How to Respond to your child's brain states:

To make it easy we liken it to the traffic light system.

Human GREEN Brain: GO

Mammal YELLOW Brain: SLOW

Reptile RED Brain: STOP

What my child needs in the Green

When your child is in their green human brain, they're much more able to hear what you have to say and be guided to learn new skills. You can show them how to brush their teeth, organise their room, help with meals and so on. It's a good time to acknowledge behaviours you like to see, and express your appreciation for who they are in their beingness as well as what they're doing.

You can tell your child all that you are appreciating about who she/he is and does.

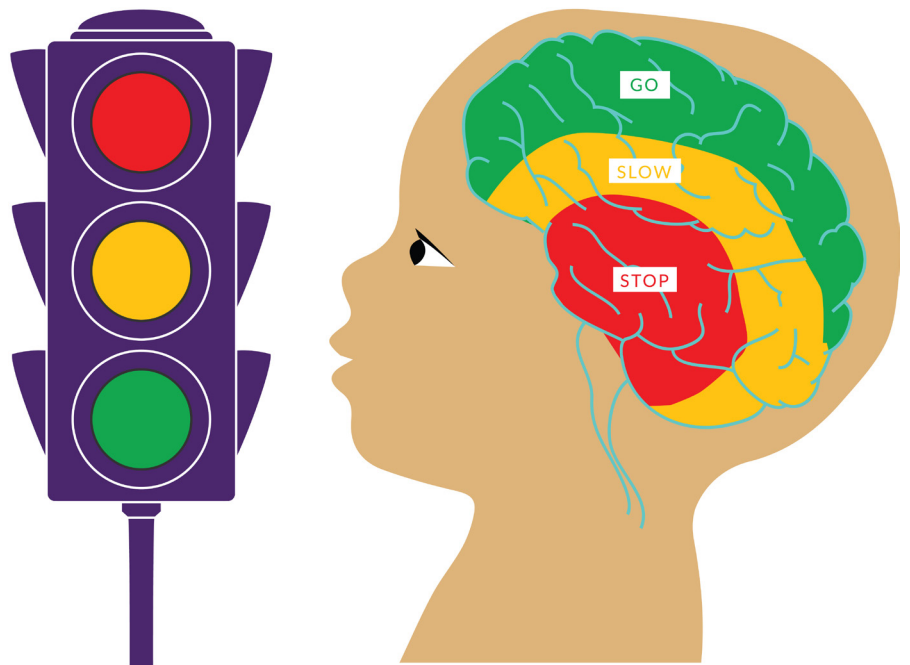
"I really appreciate how patient you've been while I've been talking".

"Wow, I'm loving how you're growing and changing and doing new things!"

"Thanks for being so clear with your desires".

This will strengthen their desire to repeat those behaviours, feel good about themselves and form positive habits and patterns that become wired up in their brain.

You can use storytelling and play to share examples of ways to manage big feelings, social situations and everyday matters. It's also a perfect time to reinforce their positive inner states by letting your own inner



child join them to express heightened emotions such as excitement and joy.

Because our evolutionary brains are wired more to notice the negative, we often give most attention to our children when they're doing what we DON'T want. This only reinforces unwanted behaviours and doesn't help them develop inner skills.

It's SO, SO, SO important to train your brain to notice them in the 'green'. It's where all the wonderful juicy learning and desired relationship building happens. It's how we help wire their brain to develop the positive traits we desire. Then it becomes their natural way of how they show up in the world.

What my child needs in the Yellow

When your child is in the yellow emotional part of the brain they're still able to be redirected but only if you slow it down and use your embodiment practices to connect.

Whatever is happening, give your child some of your attention whilst consciously relaxing yourself at the same time.

Connect to them with empathy. Reflect back to them what you notice. Then you can attempt to use playfulness, silliness and fun.

For example:

"I see you really don't want to get dressed. What if I got dressed in your clothes? How silly would that be?"

Sometimes it works, sometimes it doesn't. If not you'll need to stay with what's happening with their body, their big feelings and important thoughts for longer, staying close, being slow and really 'with'.

Check in further. Are they hungry, tired or overwhelmed with too much 'input' from all the things they've been doing?

Their natural rhythm will be different from yours. See if you can put your own agenda to the side for a bit and see how you can help. You might divert an unnecessary meltdown.

The yellow can go either way ... up to green or down to red.

What my child needs in the Red

When your child is in the red 'animal' part of the brain they can't think properly, and their stressed little bodies and the alarm centre in their brain has taken over.

This part of the brain does not understand rational thinking or anything much you say so keep talking to a minimum or nothing at all.

What they need from you is to stop what you're doing.

If possible get your own body down lower than their eye level and come in closer giving your full attention. Hold a calming presence and give the non-verbal communication of being bigger, wiser, stronger and kind. Use a soothing tone of voice or empathetic sounds if needed. Model slow deep breathing. Be genuine.

Your whole intention is to calm and contain your child, allow them to have the big emotions flow through them whilst keeping everyone safe. Stay with them until they shift out of red and can manage on their own.

As you hold space with them you might say something like:

“You really wanted that.”

Even if you don't agree with them, it's important that you validate their feelings so they feel seen, heard and understood. All feelings and emotions are welcome and allowed, even if the behaviour is not.

Before we go any further lets talk about tantrums. Are tantrums and Meltdowns Normal?

Yes! There is so much development going on in your child's little body and brain, and that needs to be processed.

Combine this with all the new learning and all the obstacles that come in the way of growing into a body that's not capable of doing everything yet.

All the stimulation, all the development, all the newness, all the learning, all the interactions, all the big feelings that can be difficult to manage – it's a LOT for a little body and brain to contain. It's like a combustion system that needs to have an outlet, needs to let off steam.

A tantrum or a meltdown allows all of this to be released and settles the body into a state of relaxation.

You may notice that sometimes your child is heading into the 'red' no matter what you do. They keep pushing the boundaries until they get a firm “that's not happening” from you. It can seem like they're sometimes seeking this boundary so they can get their much needed meltdown. So they can finally let all this pent up frustration out!

Your job is to be the boundary they are seeking. You can set the boundary that they are unable to set for themselves.

Note: when you're in the 'green' part of your brain you'll be able to handle this much better than when you're in the “Red”.

In module three we'll go into the three-step process of setting conscious boundaries.

Examples of how to respond to your child's brain state at different ages

T O D D L E R :

“It's time to have a bath!”

Your child might say: “No I don't want to have a bath.”

Old paradigm: “You have to have a bath. You're meant to do what you're told.” You might get angry or you might bribe: “If you have a bath I'll give you this.”

New way of parenting: “I have to read where my child is in her brain, to decide how to handle this”

GREEN RESPONSE:

You request for your child to have a bath.

Child: ***“Ok, can I have the boat in it?”***

“Sure, that sounds like fun”. Take this time ‘in the green’ to teach.

“It’s so important to keep ourselves clean. Show me how you wash your face, then your arms, then your belly (and so on)”

“Hey, I love how when I asked you to have a bath you said, ‘ok’ and came straight away. I just love your arms and your legs and your beautiful face, and your hair and fingers... all parts of you!” Show your warmth in your smile and your playfulness.

YELLOW RESPONSE

You request for your child to have a bath.

Child: ***“No I don’t want to have a bath”. (whiney voice)***

SLOW it DOWN. Take a breath. Try to get connected.

“Hey, I see you’re not up for having a bath yet! I get it. Sometimes I’m not up for having a bath.”

“And I want to see if we can make some big waves in the bath today to see how the boat goes over it!”

Connect, make it fun. They start to feel more connected and a little safer which makes it more likely to work. Especially if you’ve taken a breath and slowed down.

RED RESPONSE

You request for your child to have a bath.

Child: ***“NOOOOOOOO!” Maybe some hitting or being hostile***

Time to STOP what you’re doing and don’t say another word. Anything you say is only going to add fuel to the fire. You have to get your child back to the GREEN before you do anything else.

Consciously use your embodiment practices to really ‘be with’. Your presence of being bigger, stronger, wiser and kind in all the non-verbal ways is what’s needed.

In an aligned way you might say: “ARRRRGGGGG it’s so frustrating. I get it!”

If your child begins to move towards a higher brain state it might be useful to use play or humour in a connected way eg. “What if I was a big gorilla having a bath, being silly?” whilst you begin play-acting.

If it’s not working, stop, don’t even proceed with the bath.

Do something different. Run around. Be playful. Being physical really helps move the mood energy. You want to get your child back to ‘the green’ human-self with love, connection and fun before proceeding again.

C H I L D :

Your child didn’t get invited to a party.

Old Paradigm: “That’s ridiculous. I’m going to ring up her mother and get you invited. You’re better than

that!" You might get triggered yourself, reminding you of your own experiences. Or you might reinforce any negative responses your child has.

New Paradigm below:

GREEN RESPONSE

Child: "It's ok. I've got my friend next door I can play with instead" (*relaxed body and voice, eyes connecting*)

"Yes it's true, you've got your friend next door you can play with, and if not I'd love to spend some time with you".

"It's so awesome that you know how loveable you are no matter what happens".

"What a resilient person you are".

This is a time to enforce your positive connection with warm eye contact or hugs. If there is an opportunity you may use this as a teaching moment for anything pertinent to the conversation or anything else that your child is receptive to.

YELLOW RESPONSE

Child: "I didn't get invited and my other friend did!" (*lip quivering, eyes watery*)

"You're upset. I can see from your face that not being invited really hurt, didn't it? I get it, I'd feel left out to."

Stay with your child. Be with the emotions as they flow through. Really listen if she wants to talk. Be fully present without any agenda of your own. No matter how strong the desire, avoid arguing, lecturing, defending, or telling her not to feel that way. No teaching or explaining. All listening, allowing and being with.

RED RESPONSE

Child: "I HATE her. It's not fair. I HATE HER SO MUCH!" (*loud voice, red-faced, throwing bag on the ground, then uncontrollably crying*)

STOP what you're doing and stay with her as she expresses her emotions. Non-verbally show her that you 'get' how she's feeling.

When she seems to have shifted up to a receptive state (YELLOW) you might be able to rub her back and say something like:

"I know honey, I know. You're really upset." Listen to her feelings then reflect back to her what you're hearing: "You're just so angry aren't you?"

A D O L E S C E N T :

Your 16 year old son has an important exam tomorrow. He's got a lot to deal with as he has a job as well as school and study. He approaches you saying he is worried about failing the exam despite doing his best with study.

Old Paradigm: "Well what are you here talking about it for? You should be in your room studying. What a waste of our money sending you to that school". You have a hostile disposition, an irritated tone in your voice, and judging, blaming words that create distance in the relationship.

New Paradigm Response:

GREEN RESPONSE:

Adolescent: "I haven't had enough time to study for tomorrow's test but I'm going stay up late and get as prepared as I can." (*settled, engaging, seeking connection and support*)

"It's so good you're letting me know. I know how much you've had on with work and everything lately. How can I help?" Help guide him through any problem solving.

Authentic appreciation can help also. "I really like how you are giving this your best effort. You've got such a positive attitude."

YELLOW RESPONSE:

Adolescent: I'm so worried about this stupid test tomorrow. I can't even think clearly enough to study." (*anxious, agitated, no eye contact, pacing*)

"I can see you pacing. It must be so difficult for you to sit down and study!"

"You're really worrying about the exam."

"It's so hard for you to focus today."

Give full attention. Come in closer in a calm and soothing manner. Be with the feelings until they shift and he moves into a higher brain state and wants to talk more. Invite him to express his thoughts where he can.

RED RESPONSE

Adolescent: "I'm NOT going to school tomorrow. I'm NOT DOING THE GOD DAMN TEST!!!" (*aggressive posture and tone of voice, stomping around house, angry facial expression*).

Stop what you're doing. Connect empathetically with his feelings mostly non-verbally. You might say:

"You look angry."

"You sound frustrated."

"Are you thinking you just can't do this exam?"

Stay with him. Show him by your presence how to be calm. Pay attention for any sign that he might be moving to a higher brain state.

Download another [OBSERVE YOUR CHILD play sheet](#). Do the exercises whilst experimenting with these new brain state strategies. Use the downloadable 'My Child's Brain States' guide as prompt. Put it somewhere visible. Incorporate and revise the embodiment practices. Report back to [The Village Facebook group](#).

What if I'm not in a good place myself?

At times it might be difficult for YOU to interact with your child in a connected and embodied way, because you have your own stuff going on. This of course is normal and part of being human. So before you help your child, you may need to do a version of the embodiment practices for yourself first. When you're highly stressed and get triggered by your child, its important to recognise that you're not just dealing with your child's behaviour you're also fuelled by other emotions that aren't actually about your child (such

as fight with your partner or frustration about the bills). When this happens you need to step back, slow down and reconnect with yourself (even if its just a few deep breaths and the mantra “this is MY stuff, not my child’s”). This will help you be present with what’s happening with your child so you can respond more consciously instead of the old patterning where you say and do things that you later regret.

In the next Module you’ll be learning about Boundary Setting, how to repair mistakes and what else your child needs to stay longer in the Green Brain.