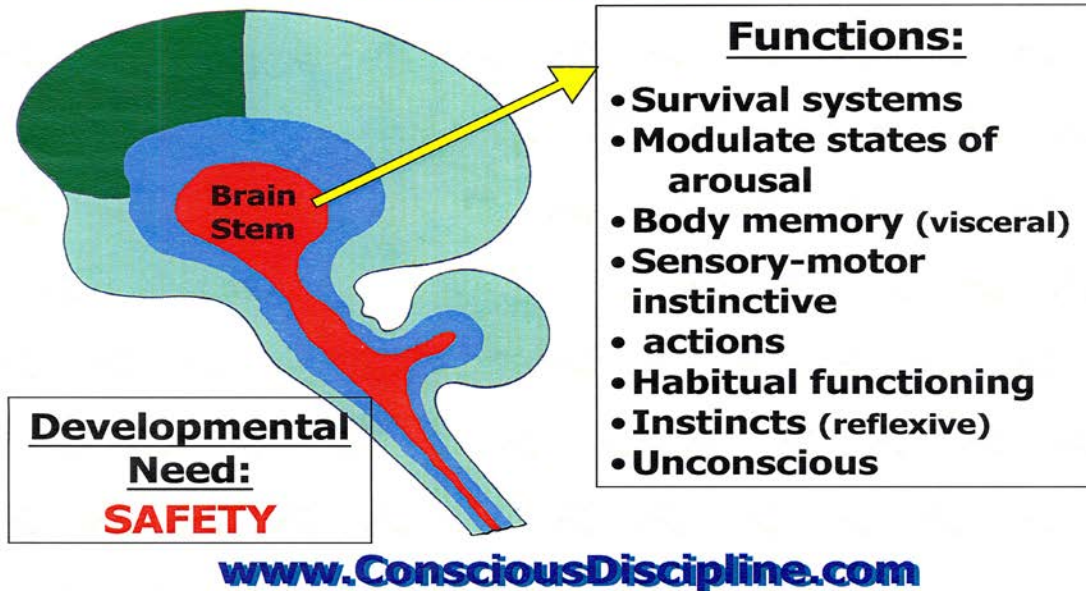


Our Amazing Brain



Brain Stem

Representing a Survival State



2

Brain Stem: Reflex/Instinct

- From ages 0 to 15 ½ months – it is the only state available.
- Survival state – You see everything as a teeth bearing wolf. Feels threatened. When we have high adrenaline our alarm is over activated – we view all events as life threatening.
- All you can do in this state is hide, hurt or defend – these are your only skills here.
- In this state one acts out physically and cannot hear or negotiate.
- This state lasts can last 20 minutes so every question you ask (can't answer questions here) adds another 5 minutes to this state.

The Need is Safety

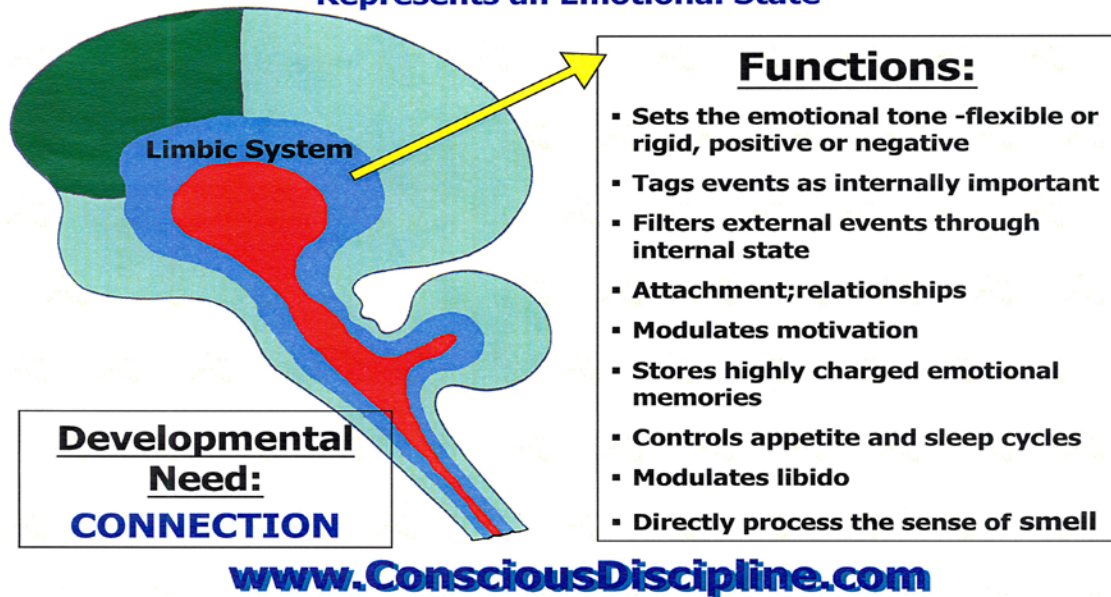
- Only question they are asking themselves is: Am I safe? No matter what you are asking them or saying to them. This is all they can focus on. **You must help them feel safe before you can do anything else.**
- You can't help them feel safe until they connect with you. So, imitate their body actions/positions, say – "I see your arms like this..." get close and try to get eye contact.
- As soon as they make eye contact – send positive feelings from your eyes to theirs. • • •
- Way to move out of brain stem is to get them into organized movement.
- In this state they hate choices – asking them to make a choice when here will make things worse.

The brain stem is the rhythm keeper of the body.

- It's first experience is the maternal heartbeat.
- This helps to create order.

Limbic System

Represents an Emotional State



Limbic System: Hindsight

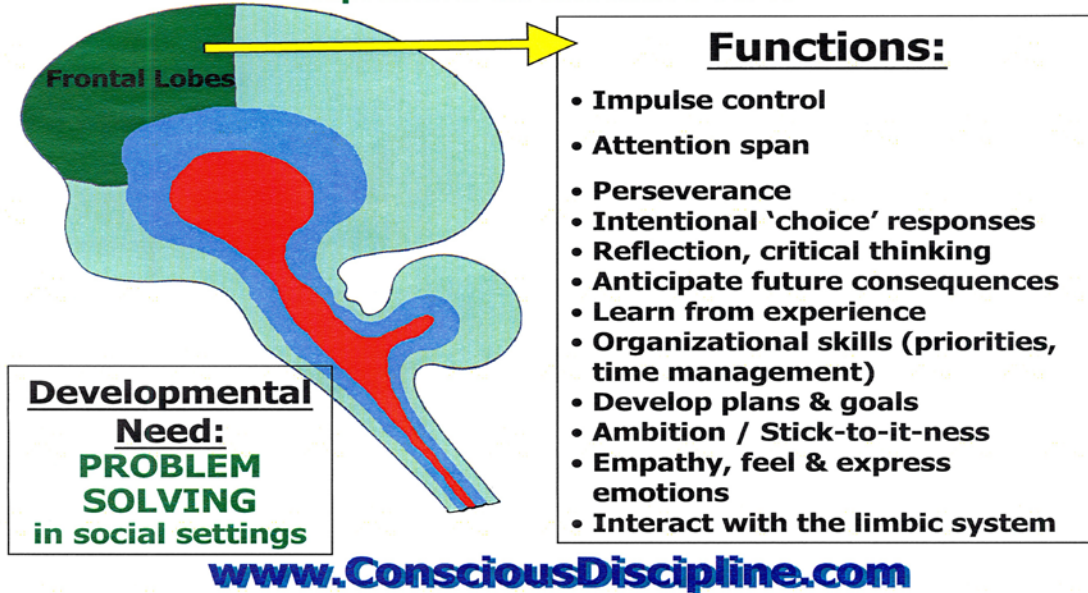
- The Limbic system comes online between 15 ½ months to 4 years.
- In this state the feel aggravated not threatened.
- Emotional/Verbal state – can be negative – name calling, whining. It is where me, mine, poopy, I hate you – comes in as emotional name calling – wants attention.
- This is where they develop their CD rom of baggage language – are you helping them to make it positive and affirming or threatening? This is the voice that is or will be playing in the mind.
- What is playing on your CD?
 - ◇ Depends on your family, culture, religion, rules of being that you learned.
 - ◇ We tell our children what we learned.

The Need is Connection

- Only questions they are asking themselves – “Am I loved? Can you see me? Am I important to you?”
- We can’t erase our CD but we can overlay it. It can’t be erased but can be re-written.
- Limbic system LOVES choices
- Women have 8x more blood flow to emotional centers than men.

Prefrontal Lobes of the Cortex

Represents an Executive State



Prefrontal Lobes: Problem Solving

- Comes online between the ages of 4 ½ to 8 yrs, but it is not fully developed until age 25.
- So we do not have full access to Executive Skills until after age 25 or so. It shows up as difficulty with goal setting, making plans, sticking to it, achievements
- **Inability to do all of executive skills causes all discipline problems.**
 - ◇ So can't expect them to do what they aren't able to do. Do it another way.
 - ◇ We must help them develop the skills rather than punish them for not having them.
- Knowing what the skills are and being about to do them are two different things.
- We disconnect ourselves from prefrontal lobes with negative self talk, which puts us into the Limbic System.
- We can't teach people unless they are in the prefrontal lobes.
- When we are stressed we have no prefrontal lobe access.
 - ◇ We have no empathy
 - ◇ Everything is overwhelmed – can't prioritize
 - ◇ Can't organize
 - ◇ No impulse control
 - ◇ Inflexible
 - ◇ Memory lapses
- When prefrontal lobes are under stimulated people seek conflict to stimulate it.
 - ◇ To simulate pre-k - need problem solving in a public situation.
- When looking for food and have a lot of food in fridge but nothing satisfies, we are looking for a brain state change not food.
 - ◇ Our early childhood training teaches us how we will respond to our adult challenges.
 - ◇ (Sad – cheer up, have a cookie...)
 - ◇ (When excited told to calm down so now fearfully of being really excited about things and we learn to turn our expressions down when this is triggered.)

- Awareness that this is occurring is needed to fix it.
 - ◊ Do activities to move up the brain.
 - ◊ Our right prefrontal stores the negative information.
 - ◊ The left prefrontal can take control because it holds positive emotions and sees solutions
 - ◊ They work together to solve your problems.
 - ◊ When we notice ourselves being negative we can use Conscious Discipline to integrate the two halves of the brain.

The Need is Problem Solving

- If children do not feel connected they won't have access to prefrontal so will learn the life skills from the brain stem or limbic – will learn to be violent or emotionally controlling.
- Structure helps us access these skills until they are fully developed. Structure also helps these skills to develop.
- When you are operating in prefrontal lobe – you can hold your intention despite external influences – this is a great gift to children and adults.
- Organized movement stimulates the prefrontal lobe, such as:
 - ◊ Babies – Finger Play
 - ◊ Older Children – Dance or movements
 - ◊ Rubbing our ears brings blood to the brain
- When skills are fully developed:
 - ◊ We can ask ourselves – what can I learn from this experience?
 - ◊ Can answer questions
 - ◊ Has full access to our own inner wisdom.
 - ◊ Has any choice he/she wants to make
 - ◊ Can choose OOPS

Optimal Learning

Takes place when a child/teen feels safe.

Our job is to create a safe environment: Must be safe and be perceived as safe.

We create a safe environment on Sunday mornings by:

- Providing ritual and routine
- Providing opportunities for mastery

Routines

- The brain is pattern seeking.
- Predictability puts the brain at ease.
 - ◊ Routines help the child know he/she is safe and they are in a familiar situation.
 - ◊ Also is good for those with the Logical/Mathematical Intelligence

Rituals

- The brain seeks to give meaning to events and people.
- Am I connected? Do I belong?
- Yes, you are valued here. Your life matters.

The Teenage Brain

Source: *David Dobbs & Jane Harden*

**Teenager's prefrontal lobes short out and reset frequently.
That is why they can be brilliant and stupid within seconds of each other.**

While the brain is almost full size by age 6, there is a re-organization that occurs between the ages of 12-25. It is a networking and wiring upgrade. It develops from front to back.

The Results of This Brain Development & Growth

- Better at balancing impulse, desire, goals, self-interest, rules, ethics and altruism creating more complex and sensible behavior.
- It is also hard to get all the new cogs to mesh together so it can result in impulsiveness, idiocy, selfishness and reckless bumbling.

Unity View of the Teenage Brain Works

Trait: Love of the thrill, sensation seeking, hunt for neural buzz

- Advantage
 - ◇ Leads to urge to meet new people and a wider circle of friends
 - ◇ Leads to a willingness to experience new things about the world

Trait: Risk taking.

Teens court risk more avidly than any other age. They do not fail to perceive the risk - they actually overestimate the risk compared to adults. Teens weigh risk v. rewards differently. They are more willing to take the risk to get what they want or value.

- Advantage
 - ◇ The willingness to take risks to get what you want works like the desire for a new sensation - it gets them out of the house.

What Do Teens Want?

- Social Connections
- The Company of Those Their Own Age
 - ◇ Fees their attraction to novelty
 - ◇ Peers seen as more interesting than their familiar family
- To Learn Primarily From Their Friends
 - ◇ Allows them to invest in the future rather than the past.
 - ◇ We enter a world created by our parents but we live our lives and prosper in a world made by our peers.
- Peer Relations
 - ◇ Peer relationships are not a side show but the main show
 - ◇ Our success in life does depend on our ability to develop social relationships
 - ◇ Reacting to social rejection as a threat to existence is not just melodrama
- Teens in all cultures prefer novelty; excitement and peers