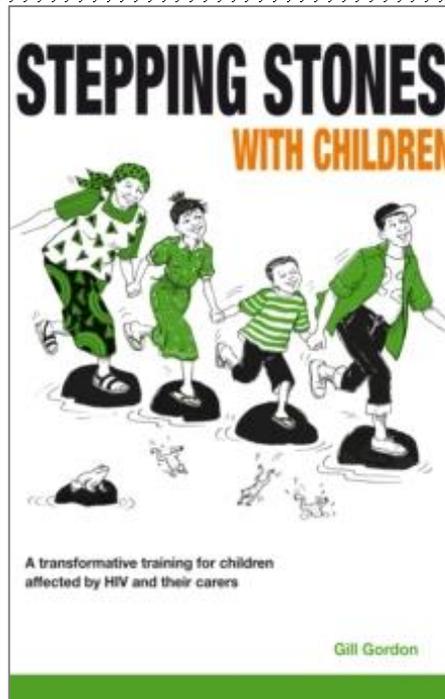


Handouts for *Stepping Stones with Children*



This *Handout for Stepping Stones with Children* is to be used with the *Stepping Stones with Children* training manual published by Practical Action Publishing, 2016.

You can download this handout for free for use with this training manual from the www.stepsstonesfeedback.org website.

On this website there are also many other resources to support you with this training manual and the original *Stepping Stones* training manual.

Stepping Stones and *Stepping Stones Plus* as well as *Stepping Stones with Children* are both programmes created and supported by Salamander Trust, www.salamandertrust.net

Stepping Stones with Children was created by Salamander Trust with PASADA. It was funded by Comic Relief.

© *This Handout: Salamander Trust 2016*

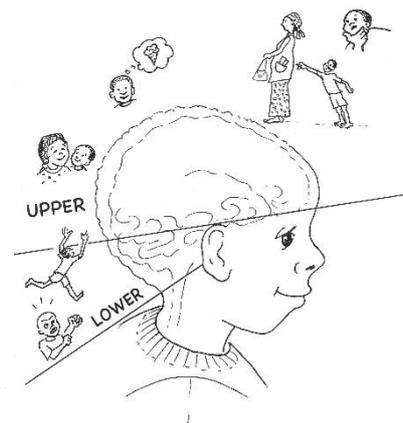


USING OUR BRAINS

1. Our Complex Brains

The brain is made up of many parts with different jobs to do; for example, memory, language, empathy, and responding to threats. When these parts work together as a co-ordinated team, they are more effective. We can learn how to respond to situations in ways that help them work as a team.

This picture shows the upper and lower parts of the brain.



2. Our Developing Brains

When we are children, our brain is still under construction!

Lower brain

The lower part of the brain is well developed at birth, and is responsible for:

- basic body functions such as breathing, sleep, and digestion;
- strong emotions, such as fear and anger, and actions such as crying and hitting without thinking about it;
- instincts such as staying close to our mothers, and responding to danger quickly.

This helps us to survive from the moment we are born.

Upper brain

The upper part of the brain is responsible for thinking, and emotional skills. It enables us to:

- plan and make good decisions ;
- regulate our emotions and body;
- understand ourselves;
- be flexible and adaptable;
- show empathy;
- know right from wrong.

This upper brain is there when we are born, but it is undeveloped. It begins to grow during infancy and childhood, but when we reach puberty (at around 12 years) the structures change. It finishes developing when we are in our mid-twenties.

3. Our changeable brains

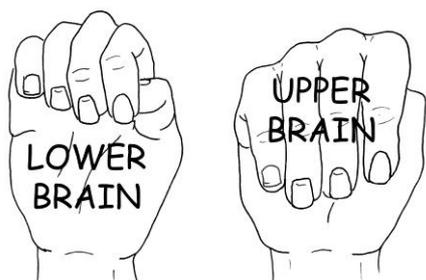
Our brains change through our whole lives, depending on what we experience.

The brains of children who are nurtured are different from those of children who are abused. The children who are nurtured are less likely to suffer from depression, drug use, and relationship difficulties. But because our brains are changeable we can also undo damage caused by lack of care or abuse.

The story of Amina

Amina was doing her homework when her brother spilled his drink all over her picture, which she had spent a long time perfecting. She felt very angry and wanted to yell at him and hit him. But she remembered to make a model of the upper and lower brain with her hand. She raised her fingers straight out from her hand, and then lowered them slowly, one by one, so that they were hugging her thumb.

This reminded her to use her upper brain to help her to calm those big feelings from her lower brain. Amina was still angry, but instead of shouting at and hitting her brother, she told him that she was angry, and asked her caregiver to take him out of the room.



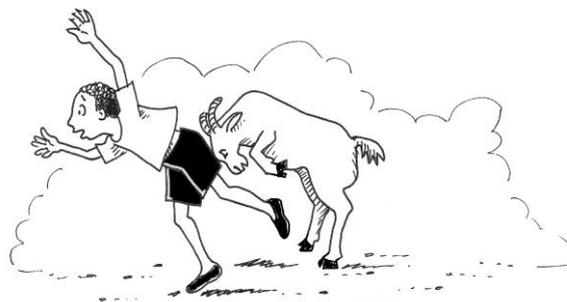
The brain-in-hand model can help all of us to calm down and gain control of our feelings.

4. Understanding how our memory works

We can help our brain put the puzzle pieces of our memories together by telling the story of what happened.

The story of William and the goat

When William was five he was asked, for the first time, to look after some goats. He was proud and excited, but one of them butted him. It hurt and frightened him, and he cried. He didn't tell anyone what had happened because he thought he might get in trouble. He thought the goat had attacked him because he was doing something wrong.





Later in life, William would sometimes feel worried and anxious, especially when he was asked take responsibility for something he hadn't done before. He didn't know why. He avoided doing new things. His auntie said he was lazy.

One day William's uncle asked him to take care of his goats. He noticed that William looked really anxious. He talked kindly, to find out what the problem was. Gradually William told the tale. With his uncle's help, he was able to remember the whole story.



Now William understood that he had not done anything wrong when the goat butted him, he had just been inexperienced. His memories of being hurt, and of feeling guilty, were only part of the story: he had also looked after the goats, when he was only five! And he had showed courage by not abandoning them after being butted. He felt much better, and asked his uncle to show him how to take care of the goats well – and how to avoid getting butted!



Questioning William's story

- What happened to William's brain?
- How did he solve his problem?

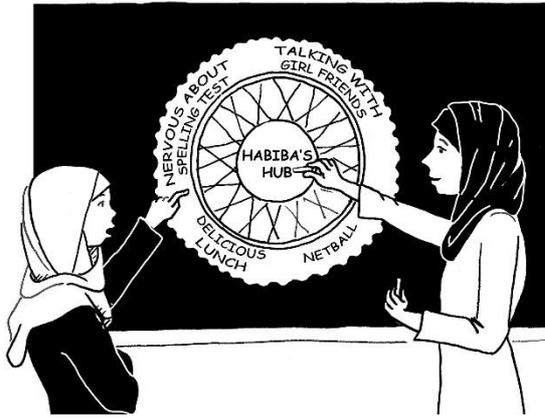
5. Mindsight

Mindsight lets us pay attention to the pictures in our head, the thoughts in our mind, the emotions we experience, and the feelings in our body. It helps to connect them all up together. It helps us to know ourselves better. Just as we can make our shoulders relax if they are feeling tense, we can also choose to make our minds relax.

The story of Habiba and her hub

Habiba couldn't stop thinking about the spelling test coming up. She even had a stomach ache. She didn't feel like eating her lunch, or playing at break time. All she could imagine was disappointing her caregiver in the spelling test. She was nervous.





Then Habiba's teacher reminded her about the wheel of awareness she had taught them. She explained that our minds were like a bicycle wheel. At the centre of the wheel, called the hub, was our safe place, where our mind could relax and choose what to think about. On the rim of the wheel were all the things Habiba could think about and feel, for example: how she liked playing netball with her friends at break; how she enjoyed eating the chicken and chapati in her lunch bag; and of

course, her nervousness about the spelling test. But she had left her hub, and had forgotten about the nice thoughts and feelings. She was only focusing on the nervousness point on the rim, and ignoring the other more positive points.

Habiba's teacher asked her to close her eyes and take three deep breaths.

She said: "You've been focusing on your worries about spelling. Now I want you to sit back on your hub, and think about the other parts of your wheel: you can focus on the part of your wheel that has fun, imagine your lunch." Habiba smiled, and her stomach started to grumble. When she opened her eyes she felt better. She had used her wheel of awareness to remember to stay on her hub, so that she could focus on other, more positive feelings and thoughts than the spelling test. In this way, she had changed how she felt. She was still a little nervous, but she wasn't stuck on just feeling nothing but the nervousness.



Habiba learned that she didn't have to think only about nervous feelings, and that she could use her mind to remember to sit on her hub. She could think about other things that could help her have fun and feel less worried. Her teacher said, "What could you do to do well in the test?" Now Habiba felt able to think about her options, and revised her spellings with her friend as they ate their lunch.

A tool to help us to practise mindfulness

We can use this picture to help us to practise mindfulness. The beetle on the hub, in the centre of the wheel, is having a better ride than the one on the outside! We can use mindfulness to get ourselves 'on our hub', where we can choose what to think about.

