



# NEURO NUGGET NEWS

## Focusing on Learning About Your Brain to “Hack” Behavior



### **Why We’re Creating Neuro Nugget News**

Caregivers and educators spend a great deal of time responding to behavior — redirecting it, correcting it, and trying to teach more appropriate responses. What is often missing from these efforts is an understanding of what the brain is doing before the behavior occurs. *Neuro Nugget News* was created to build that understanding. This ongoing newsletter is designed to:

- Help caregivers and educators learn how the brain influences behavior
- Create shared language between home and school
- Support more effective, brain-based responses to behavior

Rather than focusing only on what behavior looks like, Neuro Nugget focuses on why behavior happens — starting with the brain.

### **Back to the Basics**



The brain’s primary job is not learning, listening, or behaving appropriately. Its primary job is: Keeping the body safe.

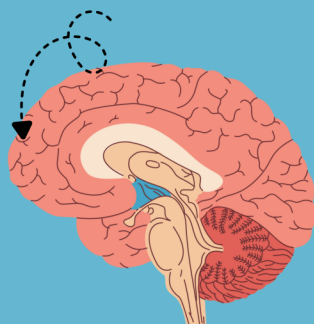
Everything else — attention, emotional regulation, problem-solving, and self-control — depends on the brain feeling safe enough to engage. When the brain senses stress, threat, or overwhelm (even emotional or social stress), it automatically shifts priorities. In these moments, behavior may change quickly and dramatically.

This helps explain why:

- A calm child may suddenly melt down
- Logical explanations stop working during emotional moments
- Children struggle to access skills they normally have

These reactions are brain-driven, not intentional misbehavior. Understanding this foundation allows adults to respond with greater clarity and effectiveness.

### **Key Parts of the Brain That Influence Behavior**



Understanding a few basic brain structures helps caregivers and educators better interpret behavior across settings.

The **prefrontal cortex** is often referred to as the brain’s “thinking” or “learning” center. It supports attention, impulse control, problem-solving, and emotional regulation. This area is still developing throughout childhood and adolescence and works best when stress is low. When stress increases, access to the prefrontal cortex decreases, making self-control and reasoning more difficult.

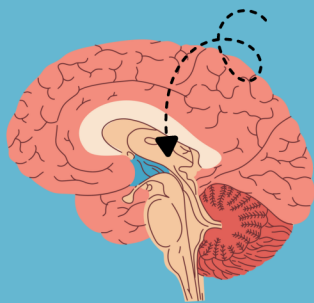




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### **Key Parts of the Brain That Influence Behavior Cont...**



The **amygdala** functions as the brain’s alarm system. It detects potential threats and triggers strong emotional responses, including fight, flight, or freeze. The amygdala reacts quickly and automatically and does not clearly distinguish between real danger and everyday stress, which is why emotional reactions can feel sudden or intense.

The **hippocampus** plays an important role in learning and memory. It helps store information and connect past experiences to current situations. When stress is present, the hippocampus becomes less effective, which can make it harder for children to remember lessons, directions, or expectations during emotional moments.

In future issues of *Neuro Nugget News*, we will explore each of these brain areas in more detail and how they specifically relate to behavior, learning, and regulation.

### **Why This Information Matters**

When caregivers and educators understand how these brain areas work together, behavior can be viewed through a more accurate lens.

Instead of asking: “Why won’t they listen?”

We begin to ask: “What is the brain experiencing right now?”

This shift does not lower expectations — it strengthens responses by aligning them with how the brain actually works.



### **Key Message to Carry Forward**

Behavior is not just a choice. It is often a reflection of what the brain is experiencing.

This first issue of *Neuro Nugget News* lays the foundation. In future months, we will build on this knowledge and explore how it connects to stress, regulation, learning, and behavior support in more detail.

