Habits of Thinking

a routine or behavior repeated regularly that tends to occur subconsciously

Dr. Daniel Siegel created a model of the brain that can be illustrated with your hand. Place your thumb in the middle of your palm and fold your fingers over your thumb.

Your fingers represent the prefrontal cortex, which controls thinking and learning. It can be thought of as your "thinking brain."

Your thumb represents the amygdala, which generates and processes feelings and emotions. It can be thought of as your "emotional brain."

A closed fist represents a brain that is controlled by the prefrontal cortex. This brain is responding to external stimuli on a rational, thinking level and represents a calm, settled brain.

An open hand is one in which the thumb flips open the fingers representing a brain that is controlled by the amygdala. This brain is responding to external stimuli on an emotional level, and represents an emotionally flooded brain.

Daniel J. Siegel, *The Whole Brain Child* (2015)

A practitioner in habits of systems thinking…

CONSIDERS AN ISSUE FULLY AND RESISTS THE URGE TO COME TO A QUICK CONCLUSION.

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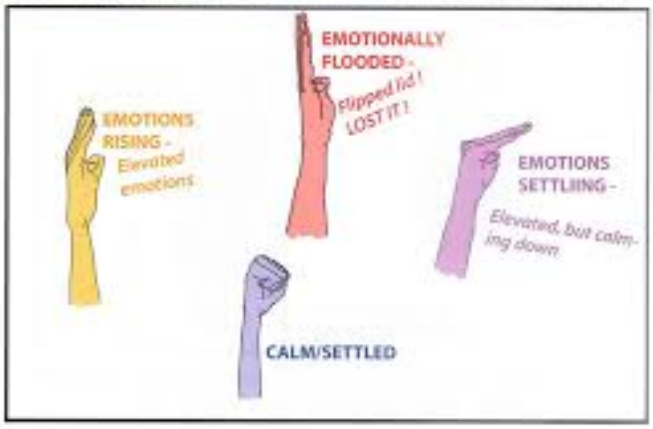
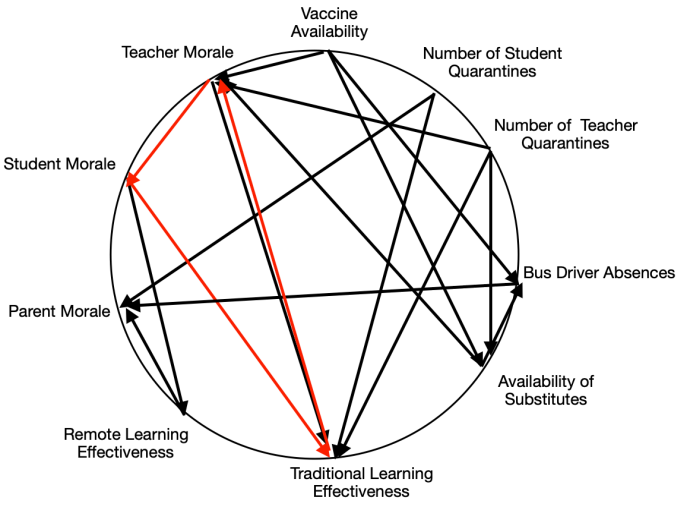


Quick decisions are often based in emotional responses. Using the position of our hand during times of stress can be a strong reminder to take the time to consider an issue fully and approach conclusions with the thinking parts of our brain in full control. This physical reminder is also a great strategy to use with students.

Do you take the necessary time to understand the dynamics of a system before taking action?



A Collaborative Project of Lee County Schools and Auburn City Schools

A **Connection Circle** is a tool that can be used to consider the dynamics of a system.

Elements around the edge of the circle represent dynamics of the system as they change over time, increasing or decreasing and interacting with each other.

Arrows from one element to another represent the impact one element has on the other, causing an increase or decrease.

For example, vaccine availability has an impact on the availability of substitutes. The number of student quarantines has an impact on parent morale. So arrows are drawn directionally.

Consider three aspects of a connection circle to understand the dynamics—the number of arrows "out" of an element, the number of arrows "in" to an element, and the presence of a loop (see the red arrows). How do these three aspects of the dynamics of the system inform decision making, especially in terms of prioritizing choices, before taking action?