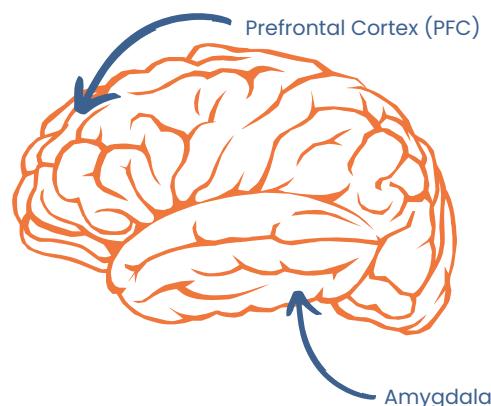


# What is Executive Function?

Executive Function (EF) skills allow us to do things like plan ahead, meet goals, display self-control, follow multi-step instructions (even when interrupted), and stay focused despite distractions.



EF Includes:

- Self-Regulation
- Organization
- Task Initiation
- Metacognition
- Time Management
- Attention
- Memory
- Cognitive Flexibility

Our brain has two parts responsible for our EF skills, the Prefrontal Cortex (our thinking brain) and the Amygdala (our emotional brain). We want them to work together, but when the Amygdala overpowers the Prefrontal Cortex, we may struggle with EF. This might happen when a student is nervous about getting an answer wrong, distracted by a classmate across the room, or is hungry because they forgot to eat breakfast that morning. Internal factors, like ADHD and past trauma, can also impact a person's EF skills.

What happens when **YOU FLIP YOUR LID**

**PREFRONTAL CORTEX IS ENGAGED:**

Calm, rational thought, mental flexibility. Able to make good decisions

**LID IS FLIPPED --> AMYGDALA IS ENGAGED**


Big emotions arise - anger, fear, anxiety, sadness. Unable to make good decisions or calm down.


Source: The Whole Brain Child  
WWW.RAISINGKIDSWITHPURPOSE.COM


"Flip Your Lid" is a simple, visual way to explain to kids what happens in their brain when they become dysregulated. Share this model with them when they are calm, and refer to it regularly. When they become dysregulated, the hand motion can be a signal to use a tool to become regulated again. See below for how to introduce this technique to students.


## Explaining "Flip Your Lid" to Kids

- 1** Pretend your hand is your brain. Your wrist is your brain stem, which helps you breathe, makes your heart beat, and tells your body to sleep.


- 2** Place your thumb across the palm of your hand to make a number four. Your thumb is your "emotional brain" and is where all of your feelings are kept. It's the feelings part of your brain.


- 3** Put your four fingers across your brain. That is your "thinking brain" and it helps you think, solve problems, and read! It's the thinking part of your brain.

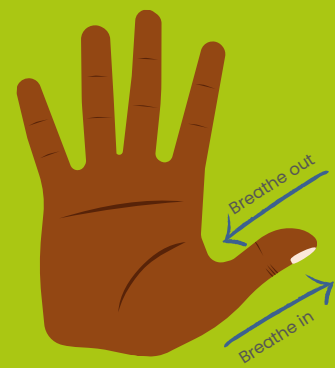

- 4** Your emotional brain is sometimes bossy. When it feels like you are in danger, it will flip your lid! This might feel like your heart is racing or you can't sit still. It's hard to learn when your lid is flipped! But, there are tools we can use to help put our thinking brain back in charge.



## Tools for when your "Lid is Flipped"



Brain Break



5 Finger Breathing



Positive Affirmations

Ask your Reading Specialist if you need more suggestions.

## Final Thought: Mirror Neurons



Mirror neurons in our brain make us feel in a similar way to the people around us.

Oftentimes when a student gets stressed, the adults mirror that emotion and also get stressed!

Instead, if you can approach a child in a moment of difficulty with a calm & relaxed demeanor, you have the power to help that child calm themselves and relax.



ACHIEVE NOW