

Supporting Brain Integration for Improved Concentration

Integrating different parts of the brain can help with concentration.
Parents can help with this at home.

1. Integrate thinking & emotional brain

What we can do:

Exercise upstairs brain so it's strong & integrated with downstairs brain:

- Play 'What would you do?' games
 - Present dilemma's
 - Avoid rescuing them from difficult decisions
 - Think of alternatives together & negotiate to
 - Engage upstairs brain rather than triggering downstairs brain with "because I told you to..."
 - When they lose touch with upstairs brain...
 - Moving their body helps them regain balance

2. Integrate memory

Make the IMPLICIT EXPLICIT...

So that past experiences don't affect children in debilitating ways

By narrating past events they can:

- **Look at what's happened**
- **Make intentional decisions about how to handle those memories**

Practice integrating the thinking & emotional brain

Exercise their memory

- Lots of practice at remembering – parents can help
 - Mealtimes
 - In the car
 - With a partner
 - Recalling earlier events, how it influenced what we do now

3. Integrate many parts of self

Help give children ‘mindsight’ so that they are:

- Aware of what’s happening in their own mind

Develop awareness of senses:

- Touch, Taste, Smell, Sight, Hearing
- Interconnectedness
- Mental Activities
- Interior of the body

Then they can:

- Choose where to focus their attention
- Integrate different aspects of themselves
- Gain more control over how they feel

What we can do:

Remind children that feelings come & go

- Fear, frustration & loneliness are temporary states NOT Enduring traits

Help them SIFT:

Pay attention to the following within them:

- Sensations
- Images
- Feelings
- Thoughts

Help them understand that once they are aware of what’s going on inside they can change their internal experiences

Practise mindsight/visualisation techniques to teach children how to:

- Calm themselves
- Focus attention where they want

4. Integrate self & other

- Watch for ways to capitalise on the brain’s built-in capacity for social interaction
- Intentionally create positive mental models of relationship
- Help them develop ‘mindsight’ which offers them insight into
- Themselves as individuals
- Empathy for & connection with those around them

What we can do:

- Enjoy each other
- Build fun into the day
- Enjoy positive & satisfying experiences together
- Connect through conflict...

Use it to teach children essential relationship skills such as:

- Seeing another’s perspective
- Reading non-verbal cues
- Making amends