Cranial Cocktail Activity

When to use: naming emotional states; planning emotional state shifts; educating about stress.

Time: Individual activities (separate timings are provided for each) or 45-60 minutes.

Find it: For Professionals, Practitioners & Volunteers » Mind Works » Cranial Cocktail » Learn more.

Recommend: Before the session begins watch the Emotional States video. (For Young People » The Learning Zone » My Brain.)

Emotions show up as patterns of **body sensations**, **feelings** and **neurotransmitters**. We can notice what our current emotional state is and, if necessary, nudge it towards a more regulated one with some simple actions.

The learning bit...

- Recognise emotional states in themselves and others, and how these change throughout the day.
- Build an awareness of their emotional states and the physical and emotional sensations linked to them.
- Develop an understanding of brain chemicals and how these can influence emotional states.



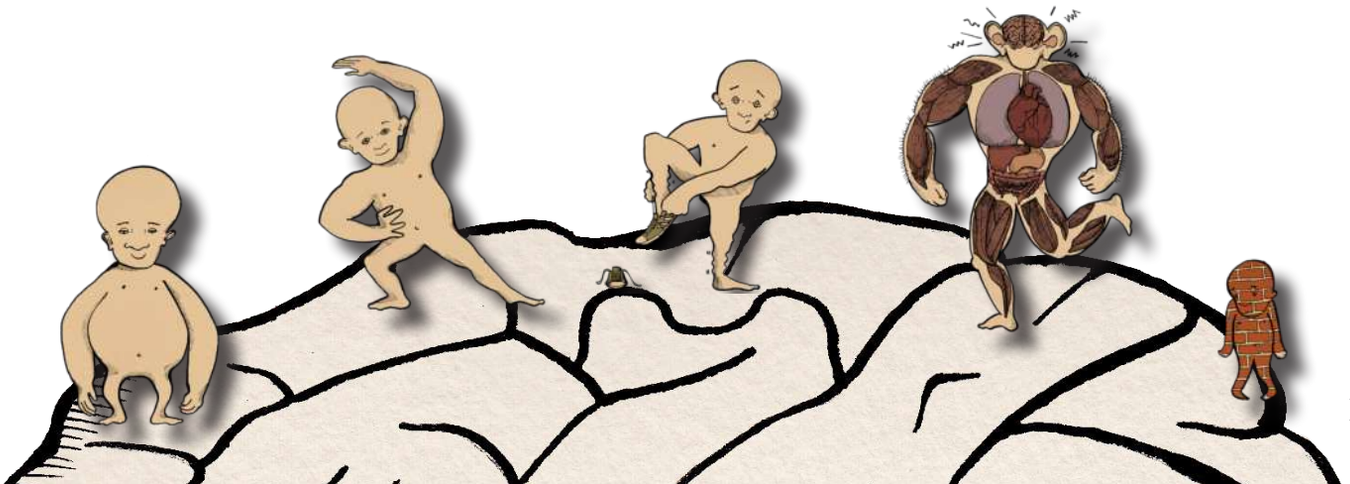
Cranial Cocktail

Activity 1 (10 mins)

Having learnt about the different emotional states and how we move through them during the day, use the digital emotional state cards to explore what happens in our bodies in each state

Think about the emotional states we've been talking about (anxious and afraid, etc). Keeping in mind emotions are experienced differently from person to person, answer these questions:

1. Think about each of the emotional states we've talked about in the booklet. How did the feeling express itself within your body? Did you tremble, get a headache, feel your heartbeat increase? Did you feel other emotions beyond the main emotional state?
2. When we're feeling the more uncomfortable emotional states (fight or flight, freeze and shutdown, anxious and afraid), what could we do to return to a more comfortable state?



Activity 2 (15-20 mins)

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Emotional states are a combination of emotions, body sensations and brain chemicals which guide our actions and how we interact with the world around us.

1. Watch the 'Brain Chemicals' video. (For Young People » My Brain).
2. Read the scenarios below and choose the emotional state the scenarios would create.
3. Find the chemicals that match that state (reminder: some emotional states are a combination of more than one brain chemical – and melatonin isn't included as it is linked to daylight rather than emotional states).
4. To find out more about brain chemicals and getting the right balance between them, check out the Cranial Cocktail carousel via the QR code on page 17.

Scenario 1: You're about to go for a walk in your favourite place. The sun is shining, you feel energised but relaxed **(clue: three brain chemicals involved)**.

Answers:

Emotional state – Alert and engaged

Brain chemicals - Dopamine, adrenaline, GABA

Scenario 2: You open your exam paper and your mind goes blank. You can't think or even pick up your pen to start (**clue: one brain chemical involved).**

Answers:

Emotional state – Freeze and shutdown

Brain chemicals – Cortisol

Scenario 3: You're about to play in a sports match. Last time you got injured and, today, the other team look tough. This could go badly **(clue: three brain chemicals involved)**.

Answers:

Emotional state – Anxious and afraid

Brain chemicals – Adrenaline, cortisol, GABA

Scenario 4: You're watching a movie with your best friend. You feel comfortable and relaxed **(clue: three brain chemicals involved)**.

Answers:

Emotional state – Rest and digest

Brain chemicals – Serotonin, endorphins, oxytocin

Scenario 5: Someone insults a member of your family, sending you into a rage. You feel your hands forming into fists (clue: there are two brain chemicals involved).

Answers:

Emotional state – Fight or flight

Brain chemicals – Adrenaline, cortisol

Activity 3 (15 mins)

1. Use the Cranial Cocktail digital cards to explore how to stimulate different brain chemicals
2. Create a cheat sheet outlining how to move from a difficult emotional state to one that is better suited to remaining calm and avoiding conflict. For example, if you wanted to move from 'fight or flight' to 'alert and engaged', you'd need to increase levels of dopamine and GABA by going for a brisk walk, listening to music you love, or having a warm bath or shower.

Cranial Cocktail Cards