



Book List for Elementary Parents, Providers and Educators

Books to Promote Sensory-Emotional Literacy and Body Awareness and Manage Big Emotions

Understanding My Brain: Becoming Human(E)! by Julie Kurtz (Ages 4-8 or 5-10)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-pTCQ1Fj06s&t=1s> (age 5-10 video read) When children learn about how their brain works, it enables better decision making and choices to help them feel safe, find calm and to build social-emotional skills.

Tips for Adults Using This Book with Their Children: Think of this as a science book for children ages 4-8 and 5-10, made fun through the lens of four animals. Lizzie the Lizard Plays the Hindbrain, Malcolm the Meerkat Plays the Amygdala, Elsie the Elephant Plays the Limbic Brain and Ozzie the Owl Plays the Prefrontal Cortex! Complex topics are broken down to help your child understand the science behind their brain and their behavior. Through learning and exploring, they will have increased self-awareness and the tools to stay healthy, safe and calm – socially and emotionally. What better way to help children learn to identify their emotions and sensations, the size of their emotions/sensations and to promote practices for self-regulation.

This book is designed to be read with your child/children over time. Depending on your child's developmental age, some may grasp the concepts faster while others may need more time. The most important thing is to create an enjoyable learning experience for you and your child together. Take their lead! If they continue to be interested, then keep reading. If they show signs they are finished for now, listen to those cues and transition to another activity. Offer moments of pause and reflection throughout the book where you can each talk about how you have experienced the part of the brain you are learning about. Remember when you "teach children" (lecture), they may remember but when you "involve them and have fun" (engage them in a two-way interactive conversation building on their interests) they will learn. (Quote adapted by Benjamin Franklin) About the Author: Julie Kurtz is an author, national speaker and parent coach consulting and training on trauma, social-emotional skills and resilience. She promotes the concept of optimal brain integration to maximize the human growth potential. Julie is the Founder and CEO for the Center for Optimal Brain Integration®. Julie Kurtz is the creator of the phone/tablet Application Trigger Stop: Sensory and Emotional Check-in designed specifically for children (ages 3-8) to promote sensory and emotional literacy in support of self-regulation. Learn more at www.optimalbrainintegration.com.

Purchase on Amazon: <https://www.amazon.com/Understanding-My-Brain-BecomingHuman/dp/B099TL6FKB?asin=B099TL6FKB&revisionId=&format=4&depth=1>

Additional: Puppets that go with the book can be found on etsy made specifically for this book: <https://www.etsy.com/listing/1105680256/finger-puppet-set-with-safari-woodland>

www.optimalbrainintegration.com (Revised 2025)



What Color Are My Feelings? Workbook: PreK-Grade 2 by Daria O'Brien

Reinforce emotional regulation concepts with 30 interactive worksheet activities for children PreK-Grade 2. Upon completion can be compiled into personalized workbook. Print & Go activities (PENCIL/CRAYON ONLY -- no cutting, gluing, laminating)!

Included in this resource:

- Identify WHERE behaviors are appropriate
- Distinguish how feelings of others are affected
- Determine what other people might think and say
- Analyze nonverbal facial expressions.
- Draw your face in 4 emotional areas
- Identify emotional triggers
- Determine strategies (thoughts & actions) to stay calm

Downloadable for free at www.optimalbrainintegration.com

The Zones of Regulation: A Curriculum Designed to Foster Self-Regulation and Emotional Control by Leah M. Kuypers

<https://zonesofregulation.com/index.html> The Zones of Regulation is a curriculum geared toward helping students gain skills in consciously regulating their actions, which in turn leads to increased control and problem-solving abilities.

In the activities, students also learn how to use strategies or tools to stay in a zone or move from one to another. Students explore calming techniques, cognitive strategies, and sensory supports so they will have a toolbox of methods to use to move between zones. To deepen students' understanding of how to self-regulate, the lessons set out to teach students these skills: how to read others' facial expressions and recognize a broader range of emotions, perspective about how others see and react to their behavior, insight into events that trigger their less regulated states, and when and how to use tools and problem-solving skills.

Moody Cow Meditates by Kerry Lee Maclean

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IP1x_NI9Bz4 Children can develop greater joy and concentration through the practices of mindfulness and meditation, and Moody Cow Meditates is the perfect way to introduce them. This vibrant and funny children's book is a playful way to introduce children to the power of meditation. With full color illustrations by the author, Moody Cow Meditates is a wonderful book for parents and children to share together.

- Teaches kids how to handle their negative emotions
- Encourages mindfulness and meditation
- Is funny and easy-to-read
- Has full-color illustrations by the author throughout

www.optimalbrainintegration.com (Revised 2025)



- Includes exercises to make your own meditation jar at home

My Moods, My Choices Flip Book

Educational Tool:

- Teach kids about different moods/emotions and positive actions that can be taken in a fun and educational way.
- Kids will enjoy flipping to the character that expresses their current mood, and the corresponding positive choices that can be taken.
- This is a helpful learning tool for ANY child, particularly those in preschool, kindergarten and elementary school. Also, the flipbook is helpful for children with Autism, ADHD, or special needs. It's perfect for displaying at home, school, and counseling offices.

A Volcano in My Tummy: Helping Children to Handle Anger by Eliane Whitehouse & Warwick Pudney

A Volcano in My Tummy: Helping Children to Handle Anger presents a clear and effective approach to helping children and adults alike understand and deal constructively with children's anger. Using easy to understand yet rarely taught skills for anger management, including how to teach communication of emotions.

A Volcano in My Tummy offers engaging, well-organized activities which help to overcome the fear of children's anger which many adult care-givers experience. Ages 6 to thirteen, helps to create an awareness of anger, enabling children to relate creatively and harmoniously at critical stages in their development.

Master of Mindfulness: How to be Your Own Superhero in Times of Stress by Laurie Grossman, Angelina Alvarez, & Mr. Musumeci's 5th Grade Class

Written by Laurie Grossman, cofounder of Mindful Schools and director of program development at Inner Explorer, and Mr. Musumeci's fifth grade class at Reach Academy in Oakland, California, Master of Mindfulness presents helpful practices—mindful activities proven to make it easier to pay attention, accept yourself and others, manage your anger, and even get to sleep at night. The book includes easy and fun practices, like mindful breathing, noticing your feelings, paying attention to your body, and mindful eating. So, why not use mindfulness and start being your own superhero today! How can you help children build their own self-regulation toolkit?

The Solution Kit: Self-Regulation

Photos of possible options can be even more helpful: bounce a ball, take quiet space, chair push ups, squeeze a ball, wall pushups, take a break, do a drawing, count to ten, jumping jacks. Use some to start and have children create their own additions.

Free and downloadable: www.cainclusion.org/teachingpyramid

www.optimalbrainintegration.com (Revised 2025)



I am Peace: A Book of Mindfulness by Susan Verde

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hXA3837uv3w> Mindfulness means being fully in the present moment. Children can learn how to manage their emotions, make good choices, and balance their busy lives by learning to be mindful, express emotions through speech, find empathy through imagination, and wonder at the beauty of the natural world. Includes a guided meditation.

Social Fortune or Social Fate: A Social Thinking Graphic Novel Map for Social Quest Seekers by Pamela Crooke & Michelle Garcia Winner

The core of the book consists of 10 social scenarios, each one scenario is played out through the lens of Social Fortune or Social Fate by demonstrating visually how a situation can change quickly based on how someone reacts within it.

Every scenario begins with a mini-story told through a four pictured comic strip which then leads the protagonist to a decision-making point. If the decision made leads to others feeling good and ultimately the character feeling good about him or herself, this will be represented as "social fortune." However, if the protagonist makes a decision that traps him/her and peers/adults in an uncomfortable or frustrating situation, this leads to "social fate." The social fortune and social fate decisions are depicted through unique four-pictured comic strips.

What to Do When You Worry Too Much: A Kid's Guide to Overcoming Anxiety by Dawn Huebner

What to Do When You Worry Too Much guides children and parents through the cognitive-behavioral techniques most often used in the treatment of anxiety. Did you know that worries are like tomatoes? No, you can't eat them, but you can make them grow, simply by paying attention to them. If your worries have grown so big that they bother you almost every day, this book is for you.

Lively metaphors and humorous illustrations make the concepts and strategies easy to understand, while clear how-to steps and prompts to draw and write help children to master new skills related to reducing anxiety. This interactive self-help book is the complete resource for educating, motivating, and empowering kids to overcome their overgrown worries. Engaging, encouraging, and easy to follow, this book educates, motivates, and empowers children to work towards change.

Books for Parents/Adults

Trauma-Informed Practices for Early Childhood Educators: Relationship-Based Approaches that Support Healing and Build Resilience in Young Children by Julie Nicholson, Linda Perez, & Julie Kurtz



Trauma-Informed Practices for Early Childhood Educators guides child care providers and early educators working with infants, toddlers, preschoolers, and early elementary aged children to understand trauma as well as its impact on young children's brains, behavior, learning, and development. The book introduces a range of trauma-informed teaching and family engagement strategies that readers can use in their early childhood programs to create strength-based environments that support children's health, healing, and resiliency. Supervisors and coaches will learn a range of powerful trauma-informed practices that they can use to support workforce development and enhance their quality improvement initiatives.

Trauma Through a Child's Eyes: Awakening the Ordinary Miracle of Healing by Dr. Peter Levine

Trauma can result not only from catastrophic events such as abuse, violence, or loss of loved ones, but from natural disasters and everyday incidents like auto accidents, medical procedures, divorce, or even falling off a bicycle. At the core of this audiobook is the understanding of how trauma is imprinted on the body, brain, and spirit - often resulting in anxiety, nightmares, depression, physical illnesses, addictions, hyperactivity, and aggression.

Rich with case studies and hands-on activities, Trauma Through a Child's Eyes gives insight into children's innate ability to rebound with the appropriate support and provides their caregivers with tools to overcome and prevent trauma.

The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind, and Body in the Healing of Trauma by Dr. Bessel Van Der Kolk

Trauma is a fact of life. Veterans and their families deal with the painful aftermath of combat; one in five Americans has been molested; one in four grew up with alcoholics; one in three couples have engaged in physical violence. Dr. Bessel van der Kolk, one of the world's foremost experts on trauma, has spent over three decades working with survivors. In *The Body Keeps the Score*, he uses recent scientific advances to show how trauma literally reshapes both body and brain, compromising sufferers' capacities for pleasure, engagement, self-control, and trust. He explores innovative treatments—from neurofeedback and meditation to sports, drama, and yoga—that offer new paths to recovery by activating the brain's natural neuroplasticity. Based on Dr. van der Kolk's own research and that of other leading specialists, *The Body Keeps the Score* exposes the tremendous power of our relationships both to hurt and to heal—and offers new hope for reclaiming lives.

The Teenage Brain: A Neuroscientist's Survival Guide to Raising Adolescents and Young Adults by Dr. Frances Jensen

Renowned neurologist Dr. Frances E. Jensen offers a revolutionary look at the brains of teenagers, dispelling myths and offering practical advice for teens, parents and teachers.

www.optimalbrainintegration.com (Revised 2025)



Dr. Frances E. Jensen is chair of the department of neurology in the Perelman School of Medicine at the University of Pennsylvania. As a mother, teacher, researcher, clinician, and frequent lecturer to parents and teens, she is in a unique position to explain to readers the workings of the teen brain. In *The Teenage Brain*, Dr. Jensen brings to readers the astonishing findings that previously remained buried in academic journals.

Brainstorm: The Power and Purpose of the Teenage Brain by Daniel J. Siegel

Between the ages of 12 and 24, the brain changes in important, and oftentimes maddening, ways. It's no wonder that many parents approach their child's adolescence with fear and trepidation. According to renowned neuropsychiatrist Daniel Siegel, however, if parents and teens can work together to form a deeper understanding of the brain science behind all the tumult, they will be able to turn conflict into connection and form a deeper understanding of one another.

In *Brainstorm*, Siegel illuminates how brain development impacts teenagers' behavior and relationships. Drawing on important new research in the field of interpersonal neurobiology, he explores exciting ways in which understanding how the teenage brain functions can help parents make what is in fact an incredibly positive period of growth, change, and experimentation in their children's lives less lonely and distressing on both sides of the generational divide.

Phone and Tablet Apps

Apps for Young Children

Trigger Stop: Sensory and Emotional Check-In by Julie Kurtz at Center for Optimal Brain Integration® (Ages 3-8)

<https://www.optimalbrainintegration.com/app-1> Free 22-minute video, free downloadable version of the APP and a User Guide in English and Spanish is available

Trigger Stop: Sensory and Emotional Check-In Application designed for children developmentally ages 3-8 years. This smart phone/tablet APP is intended for use for children who might not be able to access their words when their emotions are intense, and they become dysregulated in the moment. Whether a result of a trauma trigger or emotional trigger in that moment, a child may not have access to the executive parts of their brain in charge of reasoning, logic or words. The APP can be used to help a child communicate what they are feeling, experiencing emotionally or the sensations in their body during that emotional charge.



Books for Children Who Feel They Don't Fit In (Self-Acceptance)

The Fabulous Fungi Forest by Jason Antoon is an adventure about anxiety, self-acceptance and acceptance of others, no matter what their exterior shows. Mushrooms are weird and wonderful! And so are YOU!

[LINK](#)

Agatha the Amanita is a 9 year old who loves her doc marten boots, but hates the white dots on her red mushroom cap. With help from Floyd the Common (AKA the boring shroom), they travel through the Fabulous Fungi Forest and meet Osmond, the Old Man of the Woods, and his band of outcast mushrooms who each have their own shortcomings but have learned to accept who they are. Includes a full color glossary of all the mushrooms (and their scientific names) that appear in the story.

Key Features:

Ideal for AGES 4-10, but any age can enjoy.

Perfect for bedtime, naptime, bathtime, story time, anytime.

Kids will learn self-acceptance and acceptance of others in a fun and engaging way.

Books for Kids Going through Divorce

Between the Two by Dr. Shalek Chappill-Nichols

The [link](#) for the book which can be purchased at Amazon

In 'Between the Two,' LaNea is a young girl whose parents have decided to divorce. This book is a collection of activities that LaNea had with her mother and father when they had time with her. The book closes with tips to help Teachers and families work through different situations, such as divorce.

Apps for Older Children and Adults

UCLA Mindful

With this easy-to-use app, you can practice mindfulness meditation anywhere, anytime with the guidance of the UCLA Mindful Awareness Research Center. The app includes meditations in multiple languages. Scientific research shows mindfulness can help manage stress-related physical conditions, reduce anxiety and depression, and cultivate positive emotions.

Mindful Life Project

www.optimalbrainintegration.com (Revised 2025)



This application is a resource to anyone, anywhere, who would like to practice and experience the benefits of mindfulness. It also offers a supplement to our regular school day services for classroom teachers, students, schools and families.

Mindful Life Project App is for kids and adults that want to learn mindfulness the Mindful Life way. Based out of the San Francisco Bay Area, Mindful Life Project serves tens of thousands of students, teachers and families with mindfulness based programming and teacher trainings.

Headspace

Stress less, sleep soundly, and get happier. Headspace is everyday mindfulness and meditation, so you can make mindfulness a daily habit and be kind to your mind. Learn how to relax, manage stress, find your focus, and release tension in both the mind and body.

Get guided meditations, courses, and mindfulness exercises on subjects like stress, general anxiety, worry, building resilience, and more topics for any moment. Learn mindfulness and choose from hundreds of meditations led by world-class experts from all walks of life. From guided meditations to soothing breathwork, get personalized recommendations daily based on what you like and how you're feeling.

Websites and Blog Posts

Center for Optimal Brain Integration www.optimalbrainintegration.com

The Center for Optimal Brain Integration® trains, coaches and consults internationally on trauma-responsive practices and social-emotional strategies that build resilience.

Center for Optimal Brain Integration YouTube Channel

https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCqtXdKMoPfKQITrxrFMXvHA?view_as=subscriber

The Center for Optimal Brain Integration®'s YouTube channel is rich with Parenting Tips, Adult Self-Awareness and Self-Care Strategies, Raising Humans to be Human(E) and Trauma-Responsive Practices.

The National Child Traumatic Stress Network <https://www.nctsn.org/>

The National Child Traumatic Stress Network (NCTSN) was created by Congress in 2000 as part of the Children's Health Act to raise the standard of care and increase access to services for children and families who experience or witness traumatic events. This unique network of frontline providers, family members, researchers, and national partners is committed to changing the course of children's lives by improving their care and moving scientific gains quickly into practice across the U.S. The NCTSN is administered by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) and coordinated by the UCLA-Duke University National Center for Child

www.optimalbrainintegration.com (Revised 2025)



Traumatic Stress (NCCTS).

PACEs Connection <https://www.pacesconnection.com/?nc=1>

PACEs Connection amplifies and supports the worldwide positive and adverse childhood experiences (PACEs) movement by sharing its stories, solutions, and science, growing healing communities, and valuing equity and diversity. Browse through their blog posts at the link above.

Revelations in Education <https://revelationsineducation.com/about-us/>

Dr. Lori Desautels' passion is engaging her students through the application of neuroscience as it applies to attachment, regulation, educator brain state, and teaching students and staff about their neuro-anatomy thus integrating Mind Brain Teaching, learning principles and strategies into her coursework at Butler. Read about her work and explore her insights and free lessons and templates at the link above.

Momentous Institute <https://momentousinstitute.org/blog/helping-children-transition-through-big-changes>

Moving to a new house? Switching schools? How can we help children transition through these big changes in life? The Momentous Institute's blog discusses "Helping Children Transition Through Big Changes"

Our Family Wizard <https://www.ourfamilywizard.com/blog/helping-kids-cope-big-transitions>

Need additional resources to help your children cope with big transitions? The Our Family Wizard blog discusses "Helping Kids Cope With Big Transitions" and provides suggestions of additional literature to read with your kids.

Wonders Counseling & Consulting <https://wonderscounseling.com/helping-young-children-major-life-changes/>

Wonders Counseling & Consulting provides additional insight into preparing children for change through their blog post "Helping Young Children Through Major Life Changes."

Suggestions or Questions? Send them to us at optimalbrainintegration@gmail.com