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# Emotional safety and learning

## Webinar handout

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The connection between the learning brain and the emotional brain is key to meaningful communication with our learners. People will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel. This handout offers simple tools and reflective tasks to help you nurture emotional safety in your classes and guide your learners towards strengthening the link between their emotions and learning.

### Activity type 1: Where is your brain?

Using the *Hand Model of the Brain* (by Siegel), you can help your learners identify the 'fight, flight, or freeze' response. What does each stage look like in your classroom? How can you support a student in each?

Try this:

- Draw a 'fight, flight, freeze' chart
- Recall a moment for each in your class
- Write what triggered it and how you responded.

Watch Dr Daniel Siegel presenting a Hand Model of the Brain:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gm9CIJ74Oxw>

### Activity type 2: Language of emotion

Emotions are often expressed through everyday phrases. Use classroom dialogue to initiate discussion and build empathy.

Try this:

- Choose a phrase (e.g. 'You must be joking!')
- Ask students: 'When might you say this?'
- Act it out with different emotions

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- Reflect: How do we show feelings through language?

### Activity type 3: Quick brain breaks

Use quick and playful activities that activate the senses and reduce stress while also allowing the learners to practice their English.

Try this:

- Say 'hello' like you're talking to a baby, your boss, your best friend.
- Make your hands take on different characteristics: nervous, fierce, magic, strong, gentle.
- Act out action and sensory verbs, such as: 'act as if you're touching velvet'; 'act as if you're smelling onions'; act as if you're tasting your favourite candy; act as if you're hearing a gentle wind; act as if you're seeing a giant.

### Learn more:

- Access the ready-made pathway for 'Understanding your learners':  
<https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/professional-development/teachers/professional-development-pathways/pathways-understanding-learners>
- Read an article about emotional intelligence:  
<https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/professional-development/teachers/understanding-learners/articles/emotional-intelligence-and-elt>
- Watch a webinar about integrating social and emotional learning into your classroom management: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gn944yxgWLQ>

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A recording of Georgia's webinar can be watched here:

<https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/news-and-events/webinars/webinars-teachers/understanding-your-learners-webinars>