



# You and Your Brain

Understand how the anatomy of your brain helps to gain clarity and shift your mental habits.

## Lesson 1: The Power to Rewire Your Brain

### Learning Outcomes:

Students will:

- Develop an understanding of how the brain functions
- Learn to identify basic needs that support their cognitive health and ability to learn
- Learn how the power of positive thinking can change behavior patterns
- Learn how to use an affirmation as a tool for positive thinking

### CASEL-5 Competencies:

- Self-Awareness
- Self-Management
- Responsible Decision-Making
- Relationship Skills
- Social Awareness

## Awakening Practice

**Awaken with a class activity: affirmation meditation practice.**

- An affirmation is a short verse, sentence, or word.
- Affirmations can help deepen the grooves of new pathways in the brain.
- When we repeat an affirmation continuously, we can change a pattern, thought, or behavior.
- Affirmations give the brain a break from thinking and allow the subconscious and the body to take over so the mind can focus on other things.

### Directions:

1. Sit in a comfortable seated position.
2. Close your eyes and take a few deep breaths, breathing in through your nose and out through your mouth.
3. Clear your mind.
4. Think of an affirmation that can be a resource for you when you need to change your mindset from negative to positive.
5. For example: "I have the power to change my thinking."
6. Sit in silence for 5 minutes as you repeat your affirmation in your mind.



Audio Meditation available online

### Awareness Practice

Develop an awareness of how your brain functions with these facts:

#### Synapses and The Power to Spark Inner Transformation

- We have the power to rewire our brains based on how it functions. Our brains are made of soft tissue called gray matter, which contains neurons, nerve cells, and glial cells. Neurons are key to how we learn and fundamental to our nervous system because they communicate with our entire body.
- Like an enthusiastic teacher passing information along to their students, neurons receive information and pass it along to other cells. This cell-to-cell communication happens within specialized transmission sites called synapses.
- When synapses fire inside our brains, they send out electrical signals that give us direct feedback on whatever we're doing. This is literally where we have the power to spark inner transformation.

### Alignment Practice

Practice aligning your mind and your body by coordinating your breath with movement in Shoulder Stretch.



Instructional video available online

Add a positive affirmation to the movement!

- One day at a time.
- This too shall pass.
- I can do hard things.
- I am exactly where I'm supposed to be.
- I am enough.



Alchemize the mind-body connection through mindful movement.

Instructional video available online

### Activate Practice

Activate and embody these practices into your daily routine.

#### Closing Activity #1: Brain Relaxation

##### What Will Support Your Ability to Learn?

- Students may choose to lie on their backs, on their bellies, or with their heads down on their desks for 5-10 minutes.
- Suggest a simple breathwork practice like belly breath or ask students to simply relax.
- Ask them to check in and identify what part of their body needs extra attention:
  - Do they need to be kinder to themselves with nutritious food?
  - Is their body or brain asking to be more hydrated?
  - Would they like to get more rest?
  - Do they want to find ways to feel calmer or more focused while studying?
- After 2-3 min, slowly start to bring the students out of relaxation. Ask them to wiggle their fingers and toes, then move their arms and legs.
- Suggest they roll onto their side into the fetal position for one breath or sit upright with their eyes still closed.
- Invite them to open their eyes and notice how they feel.

## Closing Activity #2: IRL (In Real Life) Practice at Home



### Your Favorite Affirmation

- What is your favorite affirmation?
  - One day at a time.
  - This too shall pass.
  - I can do hard things.
  - I am exactly where I'm supposed to be.
  - I am enough.
- What positive, supportive phrases are used in your household?
- Listen to the phrases used by your family and friends.
- Create a list of affirmations that feel good to you.
- Notice which phrases bring forth negative outcomes. For example:
  - I don't have enough...time, money, patience, etc.
  - I can't do that.
  - I always make mistakes.
- Experiment with using a positive affirmation for 21 days in a row and share your experience with the class.