



WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

RESOURCE

Building Healthy Brains Video Reflection Guide

Purpose

The purpose of this resource is to help individuals and teams apply learning from the Building Healthy Brains Video to their work to support student mental health. This video compares the brain development of a young child to the process of building a house, an analogy developed by the FrameWorks Institute (2010) as a straightforward way to help people understand children's mental health and the need for policies and practices that support healthy child development. This analogy is a simple way to increase the school-community's understanding of and support for initiatives that proactively promote student well-being.

School and Community Applications of the Building Healthy Brains Video

The Building Healthy Brains Video is a helpful communication tool for school and district staff looking to increase the school-community's understanding of mental health and how schools and communities can positively shape children's mental health.

The video could be shared with a variety of audiences and in many contexts, including:

- As part of a staff meeting or professional development opportunity
- As part of health class, an advisory period activity, or during a club or after-school activity meeting.
- With parents at a school-lead wellness night or fair
- At a school board meeting to explain the need for mental health programming
- In school or district communications to families, to build an understanding of and support for certain mental health-related programming, policies, or practices.
- With local and regional mental health coalitions to build support for and understanding of the ways that communities can proactively support children's mental health

Guiding Questions

1. The video compares a child's brain development to the process of building a house. All houses are built in a predictable sequence, starting with laying the foundation, framing the rooms, wiring the electrical, and adding plumbing. Only when these basic parts of the house are complete can more complex processes happen, like drywalling, adding siding and a roof, and installing cabinets and appliances. Just like a house, a person's brain develops sequentially and relies on a strong foundation to build more complex functions.

- a. What experiences in a child's life could cause a child's brain to have an unstable foundation?
 - b. What experiences in a child's life could help strengthen brain development?
2. The video mentions that different types of stress can cause different responses in children, which have varied impacts on the developing brain.
 - a. What is positive stress?
 - b. What things at school could be considered positive stress for a student?
 - c. What is tolerable stress?
 - d. How can school staff help students develop resilience to ensure that stressors do not become toxic?
3. Providing positive experiences to children depends on the resources available in Wisconsin communities to support children and their families.
 - a. What policies and practices does your school-community have in place to increase the number of positive experiences a student has?
 - b. What policies and practices are needed in your school-community to better support healthy brain development?



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