



Issue 77

The Police Activities League of Southern Nevada (SNPAL) Offers Boxing and BrainWise

The National Police Activities League (NPAL) has more than 300 chapters throughout the United States that offer children and youth leadership and sports activities sponsored by members of law enforcement. Their mission is to prevent juvenile crime and violence by building relationships with children and teens. This newsletter features the Police Activities League of Southern Nevada (SNPAL).

Dan and Allison Barry are passionate about helping youth. Dan was a police captain over SNPAL in the early 2000's and joined their Board of Directors in 2005. Now retired, he is SNPAL's president. Allison, a retired educator, became office manager in 2009. The chapter offers activities and classes after school on Mondays-Fridays and teaches BrainWise on Saturdays after boxing. PAL mentees also are involved with community projects, such as helping with food banks.



Dan and Volunteers with SNPAL Mentees



Captain Dan Barry, President
Police Activities League of Southern Nevada



Future BrainWise Mentee
Practicing Brain Bumps

2022 NPAL Grant. In 2022, they were awarded an NPAL grant they used to purchase BrainWise materials. When Dan started teaching BrainWise as part of the afternoon education session, he thought the kids “would have to be prided away from boxing.” He was surprised when the opposite happened! They looked forward to the classes and said, “Come on Coach, can we go to the classroom and do BrainWise?” When they saw him other times during the week, they would ask, “Gee, Coach, when are we going to do BrainWise?”

The kids jumped in and started talking about what happened at home and school when he taught *Everyone has Problems*. Dan established boundaries to protect their privacy and said he would intervene if their health and safety was an issue. He said the kids get so enthusiastic that “they hijack the lesson from me and talk about their problems and the red flags and wizard brain and lizard brain behaviors they see.”

Dan sees the mentor’s role as teaching them how to manage their reactions to problems. He does not blame them when things are out of their control and is sensitive to why they may be out of line, show up late, or are absent.



Dan shared the following stories to demonstrate the impact of BrainWise:

Boxing and BrainWise. Joseph, a mentee with multiple emotional challenges and family problems, watched an exciting boxing match that involved two good fighters. The fight was close, and at the end of the last round, one took a cheap shot and at the back of his opponent’s head after the bell rang. The judge penalized the fighter by taking off a point, and he lost the fight. When this happened, Joseph cried out, “Coach, Coach, Coach!! He used his Lizard Brain!” As Dan shared the story, he said, “It makes me super excited --that was a perfect illustration of what we are trying to get across.”

Dan ties in red flags with how boxing teaches them to pay attention to their body’s feelings (internal red flags) and to watch the signals their opponents send – breathing patterns, posture, muscle movements (external red flags.) He said the kids connect this with warnings their friends send when they get aggressive and are about to do something bad. The mentees say noticing external red flags help them talk their friends out of Lizard



Mentees Practice Boxing in SNPAL Gym

BrainWise and Parents. Dan said parents have told him that they cannot believe the changes they see in their kids. They describe their kids as being better behaved and more aware of the consequences of their behaviors, like getting kicked out of school.

He also talked about poor choices parents make and how BrainWise concepts and language help him talk with mentees about them. A mentee came to the program after smoking weed and fumbled in the boxing session. Dan was disappointed to learn that the young man's mother and sister smoke marijuana, and the mentee joined them before he came to class. PAL forbids drugs, and Dan let the mentee and his mother know that a repeat of this Lizard Brain behavior will have serious consequences.

BrainWise and Victim Thinking. Dan knows that "prisons are filled with people who say they are victims." Similarly, mentees use victim thinking to rationalize the multiple strikes against them-- from ADHD to bipolar diagnoses and incarcerated parents to family violence. BrainWise teaches them that they may not be able to change many of the bad things that happen to them, but Wizard Brain thinking, and the 10 Wise Ways will help them control how they react to problems. This awareness helps break the cycle of victim thinking.



Dan teaching Everyone Has Problems

Expanding the Number of BrainWise Instructors. The mentees' enthusiasm and participation in BrainWise led Dan and Allison to locate additional funds to train six investigators with the Nevada Attorney General's Office as BrainWise instructors for PAL. In addition to attending a two hour Zoom training with BrainWise trainer Alistair Hawkes, Dan had invited the investigators to observe him teaching BrainWise. He wanted to help them become comfortable teaching teenagers and to show them first-hand how much the kids like learning about the brain and thinking skills. The newly trained mentors will teach BrainWise to youth in after school and court-affiliated programs, separate from the boxing and BrainWise Dan and Allison offer at the gym.

Three Words that Describe BrainWise. Dan and Allison used the following words to describe their experience teaching BrainWise.

BrainWise is **TIMELESS**. The skills BrainWise teachers are "forever" lessons that underlie good decision making.

BrainWise is **PRACTICAL**. The program is easy to teach and easy for mentees to use.

BrainWise is **RELATABLE**. Anyone can relate to and learn the Wise Ways. The lessons are practical and easily applied to real-life experiences.

Collaboration and Presentation. Future plans include a project that partners SNPAL mentees with Denver Career Education Center (CEC) high school students enrolled in a criminal justice class taught by Stacey Hervey, a longtime BrainWise advocate (See newsletters #67 and # 68). The Denver teens will create *Kahoots* and *Jeopardy* games that reinforce BrainWise concepts and use Zoom and cell phones to meet SNPAL mentees and play the games. The youth hope to demonstrate a class at PAL's 2023 national conference in April in Las Vegas. The Denver CEC High School students will be on Zoom, and the SNPAL mentees will present in person.

Brain Teaching Sources. Allison said the mentees wanted to know more information about the brain and asked for resources. It is exciting to get these requests! BrainWise teaches skills that help graduates use their Constellation of Support to seek information to obtain more information, from the simple resources here to contacting experts in neuroscience, enrolling in classes, and reading science journals and books. Many of these will indicate if they are for children, teens, and nonscientists.

The Brain by Seymour Simon has incredible photographs of the brain. It comes in paperback.

Dr. Eric Chudler at the University of Washington has received federal funding to develop activities that teach about the brain. Below is URL that will connect you to the other videos he and his team have made.

Neuroscience for kids: <https://faculty.washington.edu/chudler/neurok.html>

Dr. Dan Siegel is a brain expert whose simple explanations inspired the BrainWise hand brain. The following link references his book as well as others.

[Get Smart! Books about the Brain for Kids \(and Grownups\)](#)

[//www.whatdowedoallday.com/books-brain/](http://www.whatdowedoallday.com/books-brain/)

Martin Luther King said, "*There is nothing greater than to do something for others .*" Your teaching and leadership are helping young people *Be BrainWise* and make positive life choices.

Thank you for all you do.



Take care,
Dr. Pat

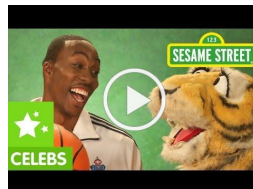
On a Lighter Note

Videos are great teaching tools to help kids of all ages and abilities practice using the 10 Wise Ways. BrainWise concepts and words help them discuss how they would apply their thinking skills to talk about problems and behaviors.

The two short videos below feature Sesame Street's Elmo talking with actor Julia Roberts about the word "AFRAID" and basketball player Dwight Howard about what "STRATEGY" means. What questions would you ask to help children connect these lessons with what they learned in BrainWise?



Julia and Elmo talk about AFRAID



**Dwight Howard and Elmo discuss STRATEGY
to get their basketball back.**

BrainWise Tip: Use age-appropriate action movies, comedies, and animation and challenge students and mentees to identify the behaviors of characters using BrainWise terms.

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