



Issue 79

BrainWise for Parents Kit

The latest data from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) show that mental health issues are continuing to increase in children and youth. "These data echo a cry for help," said CDC's Debra Houry, M.D., M.P.H, "but science shows the trend can be reversed by surrounding youth with the proper help and support." BrainWise instructors are doing this by teaching thousands of children about the brain and how to use thinking skills to prevent and manage problems.

Most BrainWise instructors are educators, but a subgroup of aides, paraprofessionals, mentors, community volunteers, and other childcare providers have demonstrated that they, too, are BrainWise rock stars. Their successful outcomes prove that nonscientists can teach about the brain to young children, help them to recognize problems, and show them how using their Wizard Brains will help them "stop and think."

The soon-to-be-completed BrainWise for Parents Kit offers parents a mini-classroom to teach the 10 Wise Ways at home. It will include many of the materials and activities teachers use to teach BrainWise in schools, clinics, church groups, social service agencies and counseling practices.



BrainWise for Parents Kit

The BrainWise for Parents Kit

The materials will be packaged in a box that contains a copy of the *How To Be BrainWise* book, a *BrainWise for Parents* guide, and an envelope containing worksheets, activities, and crafts.

The intent is to make the box a teaching tool as well, so it can be used as a “desk” to store materials, including a drawing of a brain which can be used to show which Wise Ways have been learned. These “hands on” teaching tools will help children practice using the skills.

BrainWise instructors throughout the U.S. and other countries have shown the program’s effectiveness across gender, race, age, income, and developmental abilities. The *BrainWise for Parents Kit* uses their collective knowledge and experiences to provide parents with the same materials and activities the instructors use.

The parents’ version targets children ages nine years and younger with examples for these ages, but parents will be able to create examples that are appropriate for older children, too. Like all BrainWise materials, the lessons present complex brain concepts in easy-to-understand terms, graphics, and activities. The approach includes visual, auditory, and tactile teaching methods.

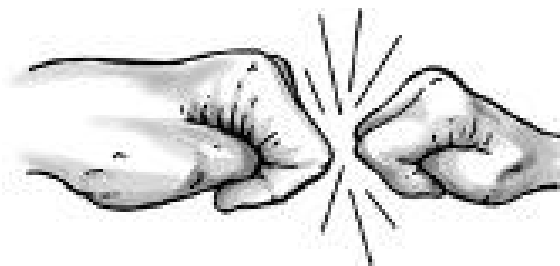
Program graduates, from children through adults, praise getting an opportunity to learn about the brain. One child summed it up when he said, “BrainWise makes you feel smart.”

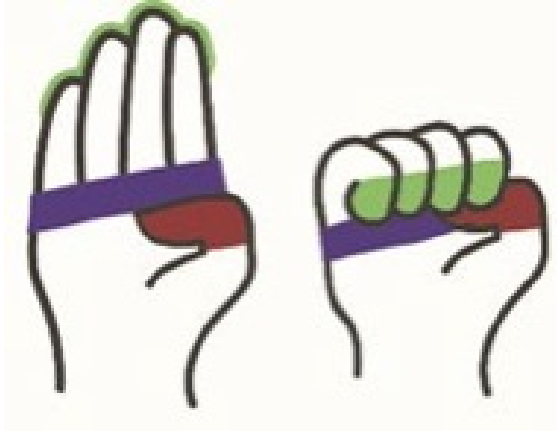


“BrainWise Makes you feel Smart.”

Teaching and Reinforcement Tools.

The BrainWise for Parents Guide introduces two hand gestures that help parents teach and reinforce BrainWise concepts. The drawings below illustrate their powerful messages:





Use Brain Bumps to Praise Behavior

BrainWise Stop & Think Hand Brain

Involve Family Members

In school, older students have been BrainWise mentors for children in grades K-5, helping them gain experience applying the 10 Wise Ways to the problems of characters in stories or animations.

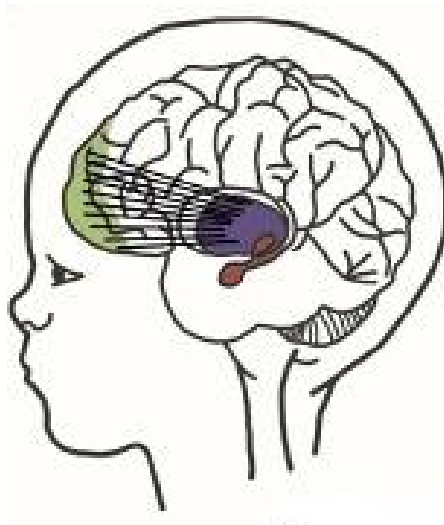
At home, older siblings or cousins can play a similar role and use stories in books, cartoons, or movies to help a younger brother or sister describe the behaviors of characters.

Previous BrainWise issues feature youth teaching children (click to open [Issue 38 Teen Mentors Reinforce Wise Ways](#); [Issue 41 SpongeBob SquarePants](#); and [Issue 62 Urban Teens Reinforce BW with Elementary](#))

Asking siblings to teach and reinforce BrainWise with younger family members helps them to learn the Wise Ways themselves.

Retain Wizard Brain Thinking

After introducing a Wise Way and going through the teaching activities, each chapter ends with the parent reinforcing what was learned by asking the child to do activities that apply the concept. Every chapter builds each Wise Way upon the other, helping the child see how the thinking skills are related to each other and the brain. Parents received worksheets, including a Problem-Solving worksheet at the end that has the child apply all 10 Wise Ways to problems.



Child's Brain with 10 Wise Ways Connecting to the Wizard Brain

Easy and Welcoming

BrainWise materials are easy to understand, but the amount of material might overwhelm some parents. The following steps will help address this issue:

1. Parents are told they can take as much time as they and their child need to learn the Wise Ways. Learning the first four Wise Ways provides easy-to-remember skills to stop and think. Additional Wise Ways can be taught after a child is older and the parent feels the child is ready. Children who quickly grasp the concepts can move on and apply the skills to their problems and use the Wise Ways to analyze the problems of others.
2. Parents are asked to first read the *How To Be BrainWise* companion book, enclosed in the Kit, to get an overview of the 10 Wise Ways. The book is a quick and easy read and helps them see how the brain and thinking skills connect.
3. The Parent Guide chapters are organized and easy to follow.
4. Materials for the crafts are included in the Kit and are marked for the specific activity.
5. Worksheets can be duplicated, or a child can draw their own version and interpretation. The Parent Manual will encourage parents to display and use their child's completed worksheets and teaching tools.

The BrainWise for Parents Kit is built on more than twenty years of success teaching BrainWise to children in classrooms and afterschool programs. Many instructors involved parents in the instruction with newsletters and worksheets, but replicating the actual teaching was a challenge. The BrainWise Team hopes that this Kit will be easy to use and will enable parents to teach the complex skills that will help their child to make good decisions.

I want to thank the volunteers who reviewed this kit. They include parents unfamiliar with BrainWise, instructors who are parents, BrainWise Board members, and friends and families of all the above. They were excited to read and use the materials.

The BrainWise for Parents: A Guide to Building Thinking Skills in Children will be available in late 2023. More information on the Kit will be available in future newsletters.

Thank you for all you do.



Take care,

Dr. Pat

On a Lighter Note

Edutopia is a K-12 education foundation launched by filmmaker George Lucas in 1991. The Foundation offers a wide range of educational resources for K-12, but involving parents is a challenge for all educators, including them.

This short You Tube video shows one school's efforts to involve parents with its social and

emotional learning program. Visiting classrooms is not possible for most parents, and the *BrainWise for Parents Kit* was designed to make important brain development skills available for parents to teach at home.



Engaging Families with Social and Emotional Learning