

# Supporting Together: Understanding How our Brains Work

# High Five



# Inside this issue

03 Take 5

04 Supporting Together - Understand Your Brain

06 Be Active - Make Connections

07 Connect - Limbic System Online!

08 Take Notice - Brain Stem Online

09 Keep Learning - Neo-Cortex Online

10 Give - Feel Safe & Connected

12 Parent Hub - An A-Z of a Nurturing Environment

14 Staff Hub - Understanding the Brain

15 Staff Hub - Core Planning

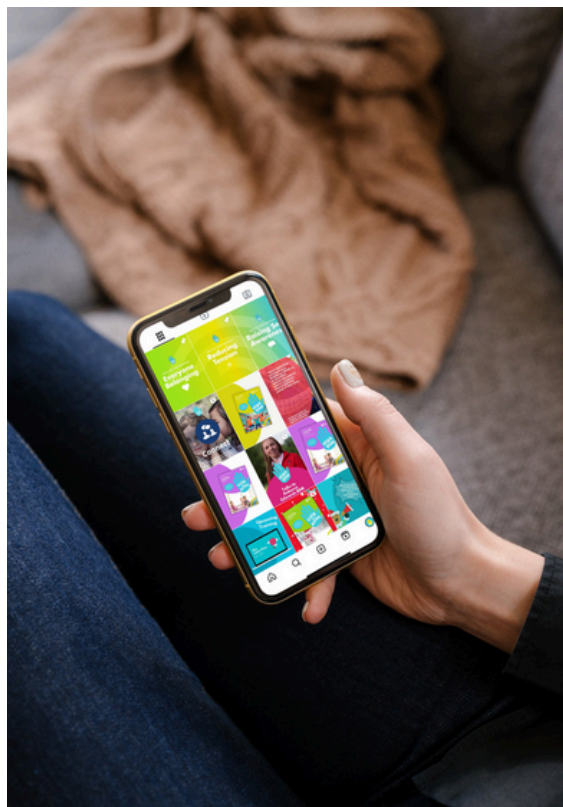
# Welcome to High Five!

Welcome back to High Five! Over this next term we are focusing on the second guiding principle of Local Impact Teams- **Supporting Together**. In this issue we are sharing activities to help us all understand how our brains work. Each of these are designed to support us to be ready to learn.

Our activities are based on the Take 5 Steps to Wellbeing model developed by the Public Health Agency (PHA) and everything we develop is underpinned by three Core Principles - everyone belonging, reducing tension and raising self awareness.

We hope you have fun trying out these good ideas - let us know how you get on at [primarybsp.enquiries@eani.org.uk](mailto:primarybsp.enquiries@eani.org.uk)

Put High Five in the subject line and **make sure you ask an adult before emailing - they'll need to tell us if it's ok to share your pictures and stories on our website and social media platforms.**

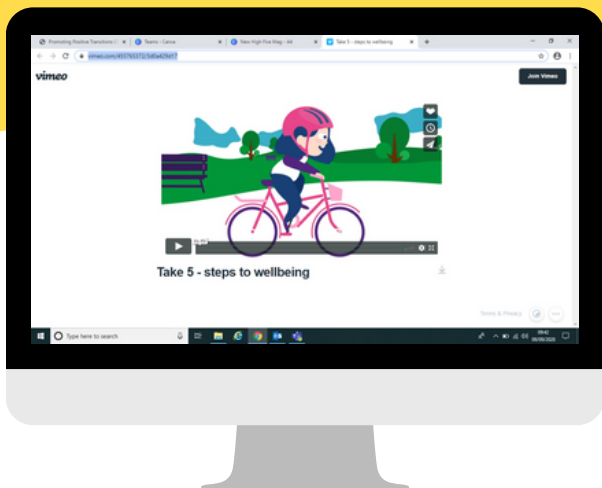


For more ideas visit [ea\\_highfive](#) and check out the HF Friday highlights. Follow [EA\\_HighFive](#) on instagram Scan the QR code:



# Term 2

The theme for High Five from January - April 2026 is Supporting Together. Two of our Take 5 steps to wellbeing are Take Notice and Give. High Five adopts an ethos of noticing when the people around us need support and then responding with compassion and practical support. This supportive environment reduces tension for all.



## Take 5

In each issue we share activities and good ideas linked with each aspect of Take 5 Steps to Wellbeing - Be Active, Connect, Take Notice, Give and Keep Learning. [Click here](#) or on the image to find out more!



High Five is underpinned by three core principles:

Everyone Belonging

Reducing Tension

Raising Self Awareness

[Click here](#) or on the image to find out more!



## Core Principles

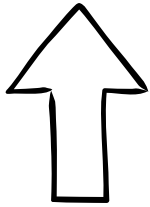
# Understand Your Brain

To help us think about being ready to learn, this issue of the magazine is going to explore how our brains work.

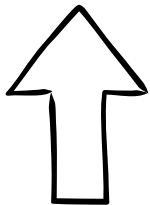
There are three parts of the brain we are going to think about first- and just to confuse things - they are upside down!!



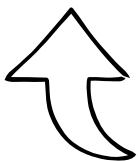
Bottom to Top



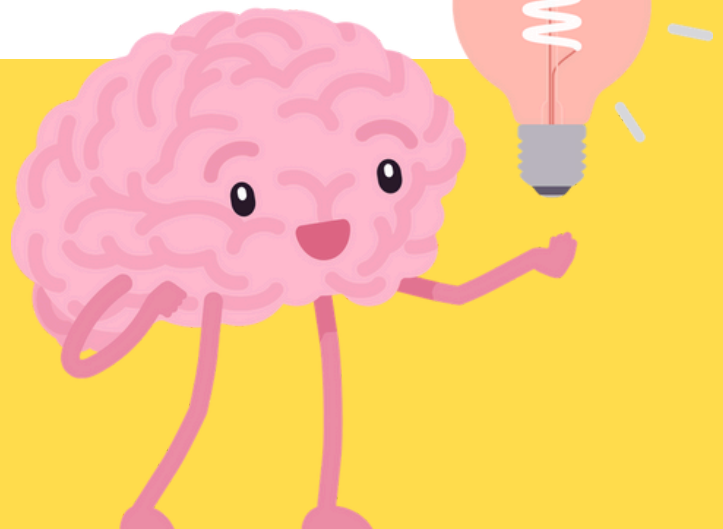
The **neo-cortex** is the part of the brain that does all of the thinking and makes sense of the messages coming from the brain stem and limbic system.



The **limbic system** makes sense of our emotions. It is checking if we are loved and connected with others.

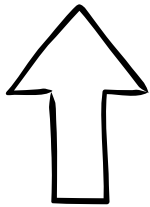


The **brain stem** is the part of our brain that keeps our heart beating, blood flowing and will take over if it thinks we are in danger.

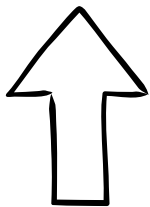


# Ready to Learn

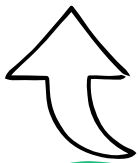
Being ready to learn means these three parts of the brain have all come online in the right order - bottom up!!



I'm ready to learn:  
Neo-Cortex Online!



I feel liked, I belong here:  
Limbic System Online!



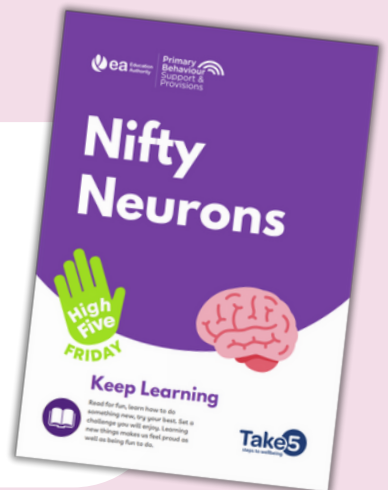
I feel safe:  
Brain Stem Online!

When all three parts are online you are ready to learn!



# Be Active

Did you know your brain is a complex organ made up of neurons? Click on the image to find out more about how these neurons make connections as we learn new things.



## Make Connections

**First:** Use chalk to mark out the shape of a large brain either in the playground or the hall.

**Second:** Each person in the group stands in the brain outline. Leave a little bit of space between each other. You are now the neurons in the brain!

**Third:** Choose a theme - something your class has been learning about. Perhaps it's your topic, fractions, art?

**Fourth:** Take a ball of wool and pass it between you- for each pass you need to say one thing you have learned as part of this topic. When you pass the wool on, be sure to hold on to a piece. Very soon you'll see how many connections the neurons in your brains have been making!



Click here to  
access more  
ideas to Be  
Active

Neurons work  
together so ask for  
ideas if you can't  
think of something  
to say

It's ok to repeat  
something  
already said-  
neurons love  
repetition!

## Connect

Lets bring our limbic systems online!

Make a class plan to ensure everyone in your room knows they are liked and that they belong here!



Our ideas to make sure everyone in our class knows they are liked...

Notice if anyone is on their own and ask if they want to join in

Smile, wave or say hello to everyone in the morning

### Why not change up pupil of the week?

**First**, everybody (including the adults) writes their name down and pops it in a basket

**Second**, everybody (including the adults) takes turns to pick a name out of the basket - this becomes our order for person of the week

**Third**, notice the person of the week and make suggestions to them of things they could have as their 'Wow' moment on Friday

**Fourth**, on Friday the person of the week picks one of these suggestions as their 'Wow' moment

**Finally**, people of the week in each class share their 'Wow' moment in assembly!



Click here to access more ideas to Connect

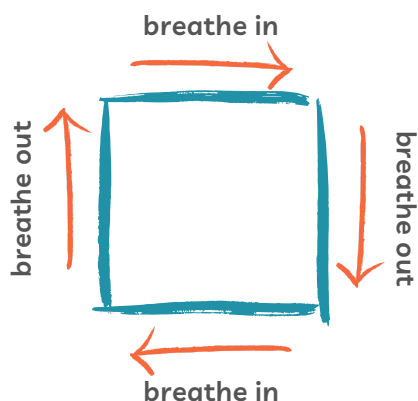


# Take Notice

Try these activities to take notice of where you are. This will help soothe and calm your brain stem.



First count how many times you feel your pulse beat in 10 seconds. Then try some of these activities and see how they impact your pulse.

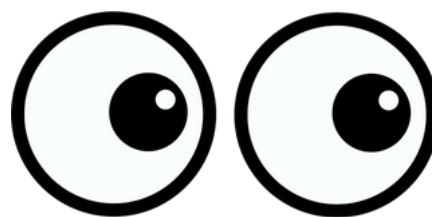


## Square breathing

Draw a square with your finger on your knee, the palm of your hand or under your desk. Take a slow breath in and a slow breath out as you draw each line. Repeat 4 times.

## Long Distance Looking

From where you are sitting, pick the furthest away spot you can see. Focus on this spot for 10 seconds.



Click here to  
access more ideas  
to Take Notice



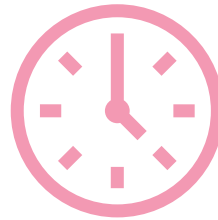
# Keep Learning

We learn best when we feel safe and connected. This means our brain stem is online, which means our limbic system can be online, which means our neo-cortex can be online!

## Neo-Cortex Online

Make a note in your High Five Journal of when you most feel ready to learn.

Is there are particular time in the day?

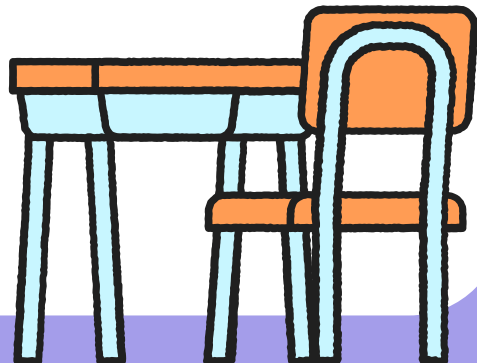


Are you working on your own, with a friend or a group?

Is there a specific subject?



Do you prefer working at a desk reading and writing or do you prefer being active?



Click here to  
access more ideas  
to Keep Learning

## Give

Give yourself time to reflect on how things are right now. Think about feeling safe and connected in school.

**First** think about yourself- ask the questions below. If you want to you could make a note in your High Five Journal or talk to a friend or adult.

**Next**, as a class group talk about the questions below. Think about how it feels to be a part of this class. What is going well? How can we support each other to feel safe and connected together.



What's going well?



What's helping?

What's not going well?



What might help?



Click here to  
access more  
ideas to Give





# Parent Hub



The Parent Hub is a section especially for the grown ups at home. In each issue we'll share helpful tips and good ideas.

# An A-Z of a Nurturing Environment

Inspired by the brilliant “Resilience Alphabet” (developed by Martha Simpson and Philip Wong) which is being circulated by Education Scotland, the help hub is providing an A to Z of values important for a nurturing home. It is based upon the work of Dr Chris Moore, Educational Psychologist (EA Psychology Service).

Each issue we'll give you simple ideas to try with your family!

## Q is for Question

Asking ‘what happened to you? Instead of what’s wrong with you’ may lead to more open and honest answers. It should also change your mindset from ‘they’re just attention seeking’ to ‘they want to connect with me’, helping you think about what it is they actually need.



## R is for Repair

Every relationship has ups and downs, and learning that things can be fixed is an important lesson for children. Once things have settled, try apologizing for your part in the upset, acknowledge your child’s feelings and calmly discuss how things could be handled differently in the future. All of these actions will help repair your relationship and will demonstrate how to deal with fall outs with other family members and friends



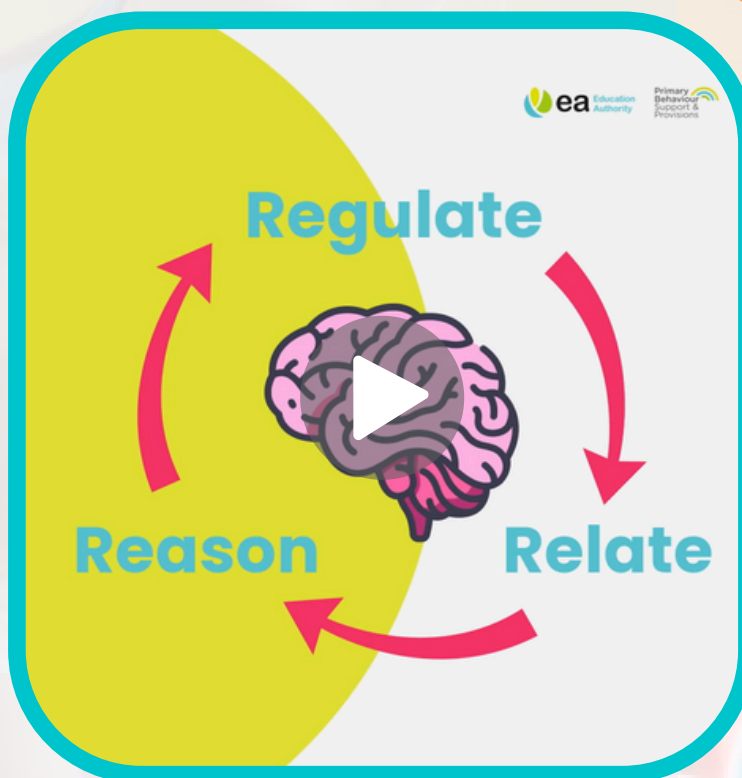


# Staff Hub



# Understanding the Brain

Click on this image to begin considering how the brain develops and work.



## Upcoming Nurture Training Available

Nurture in 5 - Emotional Health Programme

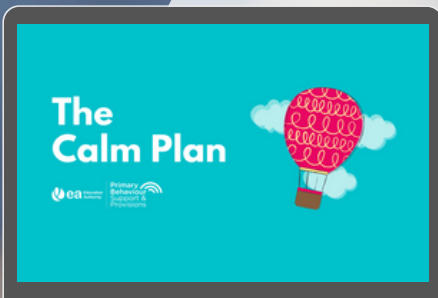
4th February 2026  
1:30pm - 2:30pm



Click here to access further training information from the Nurture Advisory & Support Service

# Core Planning

There are two core planning models schools can use to guide support for pupils presenting with SBEW needs. The Local Impact Teams provide live online training sessions on both of these throughout the year. Click on the images below to book. Click on the Planning Glossary for more detail.



**Developing a Calm Plan**  
23 February 2026 2:00pm - 3:45pm



**Developing a Social Behaviour Emotional Wellbeing (SBEW) Plan**  
20 January 2026 2:00pm - 3:45pm

**Online Sessions**

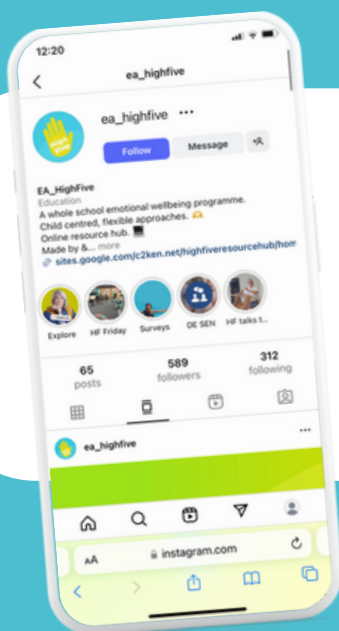
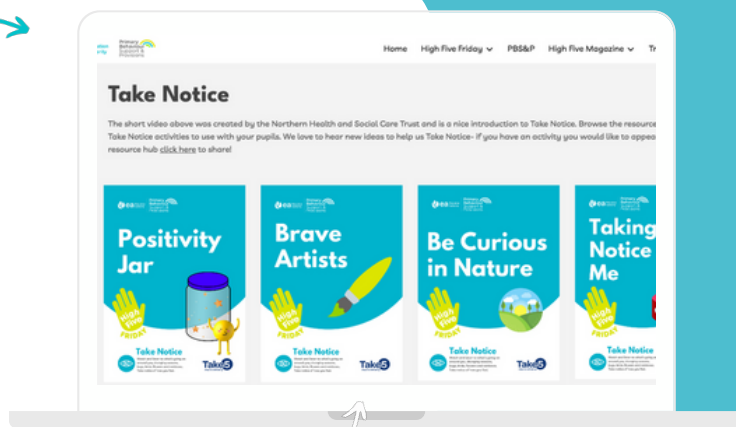
[Click here to see all SBEW training available this year from Local Impact Teams](#)

# High Five Access More

Access High Five at any time!



Click on the image above or  
scan the QR code to visit the  
High Five resource hub



Follow High Five  
on Instagram



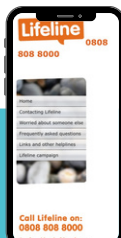
# Supporting Together

Minding your own and your family's mental health is of paramount importance. If you are in difficulty, here are some organisations who provide immediate telephone and online support.

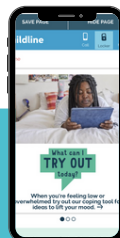
ParentLine NI



Lifeline



Childline



The Trussell Trust website has links to several foodbanks in Northern Ireland. They also have a dedicated Financial Crisis Helpline for families who are in financial difficulty.

Click here

Scan the QR Code



The Salvation Army, St Vincent de Paul and Christians Against Poverty are all locally run charities that can provide assistance to families who are in financial difficulty.

