

Studies show that a person is able to infect others with his/her emotion and good feelings. (*mirror neurons*)



Coming from a place of peace and positive perspective:

- Builds strong connections with others.
- Leads to improved cooperation and fairness.
- Increases empathy to better understand others.
- Improves the immune system.
- Reduces conflict, stress and blood pressure.

**How can we help kids become more aware of their thoughts and recognize ways to make good choices with their words and actions, even when they are scared, angry and frustrated? Here are a few suggestions:**

**Develop Social Skills (empathy & compassion):** Explain the brain in simple terms so kids better understand the benefits of exercising the upstairs brain. Show a picture of a staircase and explain something similar to this:



- Big emotions are in the downstairs brain.
- The upstairs brain helps you calm those big feelings.
- The upstairs brain is where you make good decisions and do the right thing even when you're really upset.
- It helps you care about other people and better understand what they're feeling.
- It helps you express your feelings calmly.

**Identify thoughts and discuss options for making better choices with words & actions:**

Draw, chart & brainstorm - Ask the child to describe the situation or draw a picture or then write down his/her thoughts/feelings (fear, sad, mad), words said and actions displayed. Help him/her see another perspective and document healthier, more friendship building options for his/her thoughts, words and actions.

	Present	Future
Thoughts & Feelings		
Words		
Actions		

**Create mind storms:** A mind storm occurs when kids feel fearful, angry, frustrated, etc. The combination of oil and glitter (when shaken) in the jar represents the mind storm.

Explain that it's hard to make good decisions when you can't see through the storm! The clear, clean, calm water represents your mind at peace and in a "good place." When they come from a positive place filled with caring and compassion, they will say and do things that build friendships and trust. Suggest that kids let their sparkles settle before they speak and act. (*see attached for suggested activity*)



**Teach simple techniques to "calm the storm" so kids can better manage on their own:**

Breathe

- Use the visual of a breathing ball to show kids how to take a deep breath (expanding their belly, then chest) and releasing it slowly. Repeat. Remember that the inhale is only as good as the exhale.
- Use the iPhone Application called Breathing Ball. Kids recognize the speed at which they are breathing (when upset) and then it helps them slow down the inhale/exhale for better health and better choices.



Visualize a STOP sign

Encourage kids to stop for a moment when thoughts turn negative. The pause allows access to knowledge and information from the "upstairs brain" to provide a more thoughtful and friendship building response.



Use words to discover and better understand others' perspectives

Acknowledge the person and ask questions to show you care...

- You sound frustrated/sad/mad...
- What would help?
- What would make you feel better?
- What do you need?
- What is it that you want me to understand?

**Here's an example of one of the activities from the *Partners In Peace Activity Guide*  
Peace Factors PEACE Approach (thoughts): MIND STORM**

**Objectives:**

- Create a visual that simulates a mind storm. A mind storm occurs when people are stressed, angry, referring back to old/negative memories, being judgmental, etc. The combination of oil and glitter (when shaken) in the jar represents the mind storm. It's hard to make good decisions when you can't see through the storm! The clear, clean, calm water represents your mind at peace and in a "good place." When people come from a positive place filled with caring and compassion, they will say and do things that promote/build relationships and trust.
- Discuss methods for "calming the storm" which will allow for better choices about what to say and do to respond to a situation.

**Time Required:**

15 minutes for discussion and mind storm creation. *Note: We suggest students experience the PEACE Factors presentation prior to completing this activity.*

**What You Will Need:**

- Mason jars or large baby food jars with labels removed – one for every child. (prepared in advance)
- Any representation of a "person" excluding war figures will work fine to glue into the jar base – one per child. (purchased in advance)
- Baby Oil
- Glitter
- Super glue to adhere "person" to jar
- Paper towels



**Details:**

**PREPARATION PRIOR TO ACTIVITY:**

- Obtain large baby food jars (one per student).
- Prepare large baby food jars by washing them and removing the labels.
- Purchase a figure that can represent a "person." You can find things at a local store such as Party City, the Dollar Store and online.
- Glue the smiley face person to the inside-bottom of the jar with super glue and allow time to dry.

**COMPLETED WITH STUDENTS:**

- Distribute one baby food jar, with the "person" glued into the bottom, to each student.
- Students will write their name on the bottom of the jar or on the lid with a permanent marker.
- Students pour baby oil in the jar, covering the "person."
- Students add a small amount of glitter to the jar.
- Seal the jar with its cover and super glue around the lid to secure.
- Summarize the symbolism of the mind storm:
  - Refer to the calm, clear water: The water represents a person's thoughts, which are kind and compassionate. They are able to "see things clearly" and make good choices with their words and actions. Let the students remind you about all of the things the clear water represents\
  - Shake the jar to create murky water: This storm represents our mind when we are worked up inside. Notice that we can't see through the jar clearly, which is similar to our mind being filled with too many negative thoughts that stop us from making good choices.

**Reflection/Discussion:**

- ASK: Do you ever feel like you are having mind storm? What causes the negative thoughts?  
*Let the students remind you about the things that cause the murky water (i.e. lack of confidence, anger, taking things personally, hurt feelings, not being included).*
- ASK: What can you do to settle the water (calm your mind) so you stop the negative thoughts and don't say or do mean things?  
Discuss the choices they have by brainstorming ways to calm down. Examples may include breathing deeply, counting to four, sharing that you are frustrated and walk away, exercising/spending time with activities that keep you from "thinking too much", trying not to take things personally, looking at things from another person's perspective, etc.
- ASK: Do you realize your thoughts are negative before you speak or act or do you speak and act without thinking and then end up feeling bad about something you've said or done afterwards?
- Let the students know that storm always passes and things settle. Our goal, during stressful situations, is to help things settle in your mind before you speak or act.
- Talk about how peace is a choice. It takes effort to think positive thoughts before we speak and act.
- Develop a plan that reminds kids to CHOOSE PEACE. It may include vocabulary posted somewhere that they'll use to express their frustration. You can also use the mind storm visuals in the room as a reminder to think clearly.
- Additional idea if time allows: Help them work through situations that occur in the classroom, on the playground, or on the bus. The activity will allow them to work through the thoughts, words, and actions on paper to help them see that they always have time to make a choice to think positive, say nice things, and act with kindness.

**Outcome:**

The mind storm provides a visual awareness of our thoughts. Our thoughts determine how we speak and act. We can choose to think positive thoughts, leaving the negative thoughts at the bottom where they don't cloud our judgment.

**Communication to Parents:**

The students have created a "mind storm" that represents what happens in our minds when we have negative thoughts and cannot see situations clearly. We talked about how the storm always passes and things settle but it's important to stop, breath and think positive before they respond to a situation. This will allow them to make a good choice to respond in a peaceful manner.