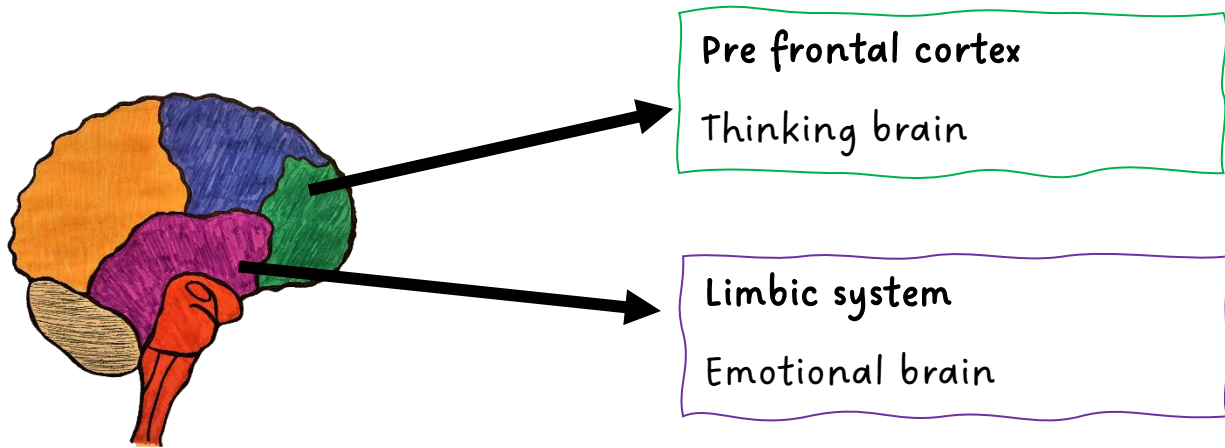


Learning and our brain



We use different parts of our brains for different things. The **pre frontal cortex** (thinking brain) is the part of the brain we use for many of the things we need to learn. These include:

- Focusing our attention
- Managing and regulating our emotions
- Planning for the future
- Making decisions
- Problem solving
- Managing different pieces of information.

The **limbic system** (emotional brain) is the part of the brain that helps us to look for any threats around us and to know if we are safe. It is the part of the brain where the 'fight, flight, freeze' response happens.

If stressful things have happened to us in the past, especially if the stress has lasted for a long time, our emotional brain (limbic system) can become overactive. This is a natural effect of our brain and body trying to keep us safe. It can mean that we keep feeling stressed or unsafe, even when things are calm and we are safe. Some people may:

- find it difficult to relax.
- have problems sleeping.
- always feel 'on edge'/look out for threats all the time (hypervigilance).
- Feel disconnected from themselves or the world around them.
- Find it hard to focus on and remember things.
- Find it hard to feel comfortable with other people.

When our emotional brain (limbic system) is in control, it's difficult to learn or study because our brain and body are focusing on keeping us safe. To be able to study and learn, we need to feel relaxed and calm, so that the thinking brain (pre frontal cortex) can come back online.

There are some activities that can help us focus on the present moment (sometimes called grounding) and relax. Take a moment to think. What helps you relax, or come into the present moment? Write down some ideas...

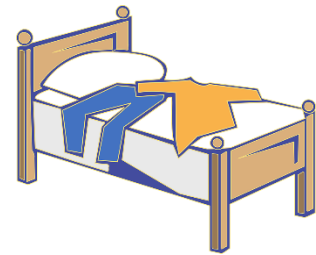
Getting ready for learning-relaxation activities.

These are some things you can do that might help you relax. You could do them before you study, or any time you need to relax.

5, 4, 3, 2, 1 grounding activity

Focus on where you are. Notice

+ 5 things you can see



+ 4 things you can touch



+ 3 things you can hear



+ 2 things you can smell



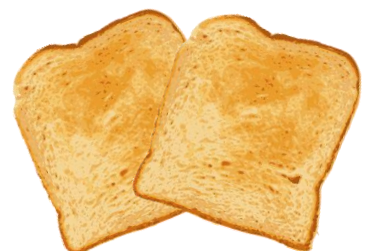
(or a smell you like)



+ 1 thing you can taste



(or a taste you like)



Make

Draw, doodle, colour in, make a paper plane.

Notice the colours and shapes.

Don't worry about what it looks like.

This is just for you.



Move.

Throw a ball, go for a walk, exercise.

Notice what you can see, hear and touch.



Make a hot or cold drink.

Notice how it feels in your hands (be careful not to burn yourself).

Notice the taste as you drink.



Listen carefully.

To music you like.

What instruments can you hear?

To the sounds around you. What can you hear?

