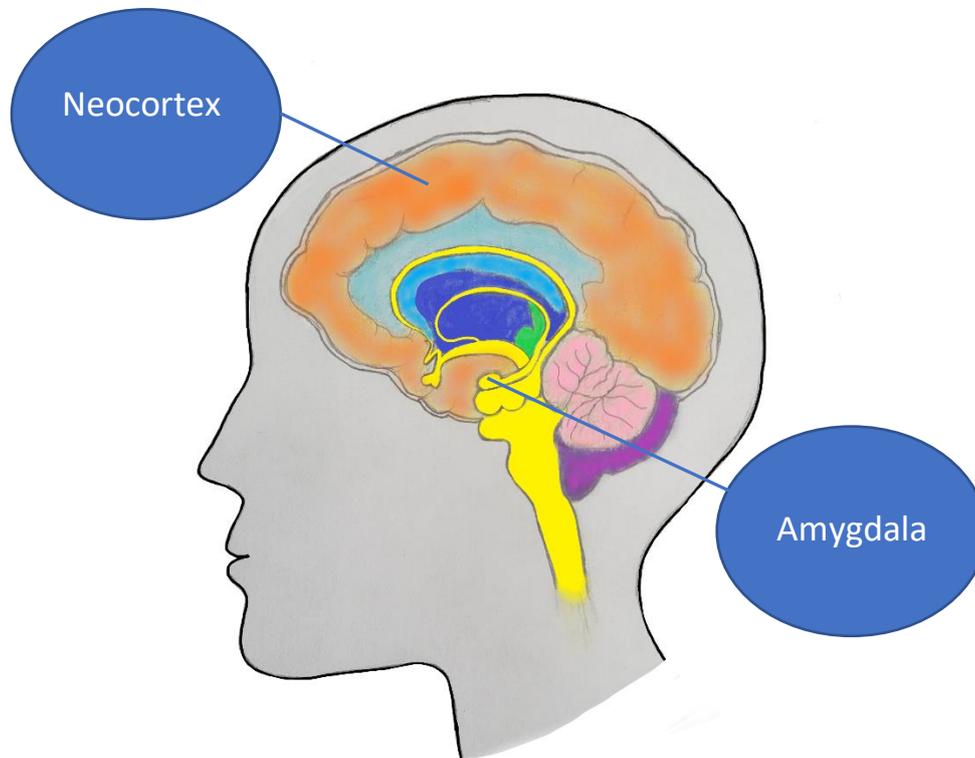


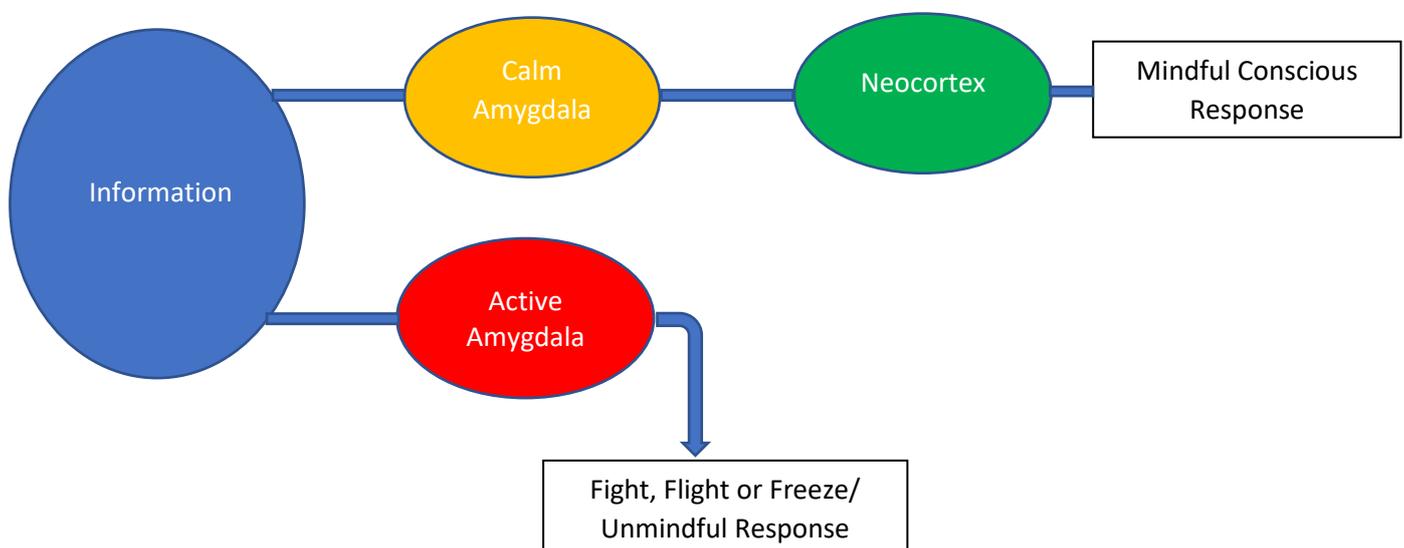
What Happens to Your Brain When You Feel Stressed and What Can You Do?

The brain can do many jobs. It controls muscles, functions in the body like heart rate and body temperature and it is responsible for language, logical thinking, solving maths problems, creativity and so much more!

There are mainly 2 parts of the brain that help you to respond to things that happen around you: The Neocortex, the thinking brain and the Amygdala, which keeps you safe in a dangerous situation. The Amygdala can hijack your thinking brain in times of danger or stress, even though it is as small as a little grape! Let's take a closer look:



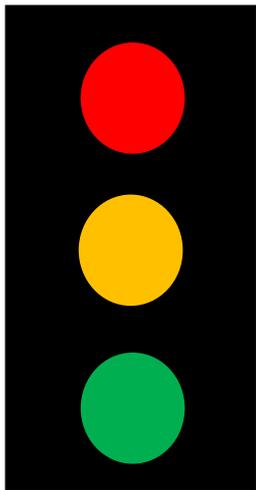
Information about the world around you is taken in with your eyes, ears and other senses, but if there seems to be a threat or danger the Amygdala becomes activated before the Neocortex, because it has a direct pathway, or shortcut from the senses. This allows the Amygdala to start a reaction before your Neocortex has time to fully understand what is happening. This is when you react with a fight, flight (run) or freeze response, without much thought. This is great if you must react to a dangerous situation, like jump out of the way of a speeding car, but not so great if something has upset you and you can't control your emotions positively. If not faced with immediate danger, negatively reacting without much thought to a situation is known as an unmindful response.



Your Amygdala can be very useful in dangerous situations, but these days people are feeling stressed all the time, without facing immediate danger, so we need to find ways of making ourselves feel calmer and more able to make good decisions. Here is a great technique to help you:

The Stop Tool

Let's say someone has said something to really upset you and all you want to do is shout at them, using The Stop Tool can help you deal with it much more positively:



STOP

Take a breath (or a few)

Observe your thoughts and feelings? Can you deal with this calmly or do you need to walk away and discuss it later? Make a mental list of possible ways to deal with this positively.

Proceed with your choice. Make your decision so that you respond in the best way you can, rather than react to it.

Breathing slowly and deeply can calm your Amygdala and allow your body to return to a state of calm. It works! Millions of people use breathing techniques around the world. To discover different methods, look at 'Breathing Techniques' on the Children's Page:

www.intowellbeing.co.uk/children-s-page

Enjoy!

Lois Stavrou

Health and Wellbeing Coach