

De-Escalation Tips: For When the Mid Brain Takes Over

Partly adapted from *Conflict Unraveled: Fixing Problems at Work and in families* by Andra Medea

We refer to this as "**having a flipped lid**" or "**flooding**"

Tips for when **YOU** have flipped your lid:

- **Recognize what it feels like physically:** fast heart beats, pounding head, a sense of urgency etc. Learn your own body's warning signs.
- **Recognize what it feels like mentally:** a sense of urgency, thoughts that keep repeating or going in circles, an inability to think calmly and clearly (or do mental math). Learn your own body's warning signs.
- **Take a time out from the situation to calm down:** Recognize that continued engagement isn't going to help.
 - ✓ **Focus on your breathing:** Do belly breathing.
 - ✓ **Use large muscles:** walk, do isometrics, do windmills with your arms.
- **Try to engage your cortex:** Do mental math, spell things backwards, list facts...and slow the pace.

Tips for when the **OTHER** person has flipped his/her lid (child or adult):

- **Watch for signs in the other person:** Irrational action, flushed face, intense emotion, disjointed sentences.
- **Notice your own body:** Remember that mirror neurons work quickly. Don't let the other person's flipped lid "catch you."
- **Remember safety:** People who are using their mid brain and not their cortex do not act rationally and can be physically dangerous. Stay calm, move slowly and be aware.
- **Use your mirror neurons:** The more you stay calm and connected, the easier it is for them to calm down.
 - ✓ **Acknowledge feelings:** using few words and calm empathetic tone.
- **Don't talk at them:** Don't touch them, and don't make fast movements. If they want to leave (and it is safe) let them.
Don't crowd them: Don't demand from them, don't give complicated directions (they cannot process them).
- **Invite them to take a time out (non punitive) or "cool down time" (CDT):** This works best if it is an option, not a command.
- **Simple tasks may engage their cortex:** You might ask them to remind you how their name is spelled, to count to ten, ask if they remember how to spell your name.
- **Ask for their help:** When they have begun to de-escalate, change the subject by asking for their help. "I can tell you aren't ready to engage in work yet, but are you calm enough to help me by?" "I can tell you aren't quite ready to play again, but would you be willing to help me by...?"