

MODULE 4: Understanding the Child's Brain

Lesson Title: *Behavior Is Communication*



Module 4 Worksheet: Emotional Backpack

Name: _____

Date: _____

Every behavior carries a backpack, packed with what your child is carrying but can't always express.

Think of a recent behavioral outburst and complete the backpack.

What happened?

What might they have been feeling?

What needs were likely unmet? (sleep, hunger, control, safety, etc.)

What triggered the behavior?

What was my initial response?

How could I respond differently next time?

MODULE 4: Understanding the Child's Brain

Lesson Title: *Behavior Is Communication*



Behavior Observation Journal

Track your child's behavior for the next seven days. Write down each event on the chart below.

| Date/Time | Before the Behavior | During the Behavior | After the Behavior | Possible Meaning |
|-----------|---------------------|---------------------|--------------------|------------------|
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |

Co-Regulation Techniques Guide:

Use the following Co-Regulation Techniques when your child is experiencing an emotional breakdown.

1. **Be Present:** Physically and emotionally be with your child.
2. **Stay Calm:** Your calm presence helps them regulate their emotions.
3. **Validate Feelings:** Acknowledge and accept their emotions.
4. **Use a Soft Voice:** Speak in a soothing and gentle tone.
5. **Offer Comfort:** Provide hugs, pats, or gentle touch if appropriate.
6. **Deep Breathing:** Practice taking deep breaths together.

MODULE 4: Understanding the Child's Brain

Lesson Title: *Behavior Is Communication*



Module 4 Journal Prompts

Prompt 1:

When my child acts out, what's usually going on *underneath*?

Prompt 2:

How do I regulate my own emotions when my child is losing control?

Prompt 3:

What might be in *my* emotional backpack?

Weekly Affirmation

1. "I am learning to see my child's behavior as a signal, not a threat. I am shaping their brain through connection, not control."
 2. "My child's behavior is a message. I choose to listen with love."
-

MODULE 4: Understanding the Child's Brain

Lesson Title: *Behavior Is Communication*



Brain-Based Behavior Cheat Sheet

Brain Parts & Their Roles

- **Reptilian Brain (Survival)**
Controls fight, flight, freeze. Activates in stress or danger.
 - **Limbic System (Emotional)**
Handles emotions, attachment, and memory. Highly active in young children.
 - **Prefrontal Cortex (Thinking)**
Controls decision-making, logic, and impulse control. Not fully developed until around age 25.
-

Behavior Signals & Brain Activity

| <u>Behavior</u> | <u>What's Happening in the Brain</u> |
|-------------------|---|
| Tantrums | Overactive limbic system (emotional overload) |
| Backtalk | Poor impulse control, testing autonomy (immature PFC) |
| Avoiding homework | Anxiety or shame, conflict in the cortex, and emotion |
| Lying | Survival response to fear of punishment |
| Sibling conflict | Emotional dysregulation and need for connection |

Parenting Strategies

- Stay calm to regulate your child's nervous system.
 - Connect before you correct.
 - Model calm words and self-regulation techniques.
 - Offer choices to activate the thinking brain.
 - Create predictable routines to reduce fear and confusion.
-

Key Reminder

"Children borrow your calm before they create their own."

You're not just managing behavior—you're mentoring the brain.
