



universal design

CONFERENCE

17 - 18 May 2021

Victoria Pavilion, Melbourne Showgrounds

TITLE:

**Thriving at school: how interoception is
helping children and young people
engage in learning everyday**

PRESENTED BY:

Dr Emma GOODALL

Hosted by



Organised by



Today we will look at:

- What the issue is: disenfranchised children and young people can struggle to emotionally self-regulate, and experience higher rates of disengagement and suspensions as well as poorer learning outcomes.
- Solution: teaching interoception skills to all students can positively influence their engagement and achievement in the classroom, and shift a school's culture to being more pro-social.
- Overview of interoception and its role in emotional cognition, expression and regulation.
- How to implement a range of interoception activities to support well-being and engagement in schools and other contexts, such as in the home, justice, mental health and aged care.
- Introduction to two practical tools to use with children and adults to support the development of self-awareness and connectedness in a positive and non-judgemental manner.

Note on use of language

- As an autistic I prefer and use IDENTITY first language
- If you cannot tell I am a person.....
 - I am not with autism, it is integral to my being
- I respect the choices of other disabled people to choose person first language if they want to
- Everyone has the right to choose how they describe themselves
 - I am neurodivergent (autistic), cis female, disabled.

Disenfranchised in education

Who? Why? So what?

Disenfranchised in education – Who?

- Depends on the school & the individual teacher
- But as a system:
 - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders
 - Disabled students – particularly autistic &/or intellectual disability
 - Non-English speakers & non-speaking students
 - Students living in poverty
 - Homeless students
 - Drug/alcohol addicted students or family members

Disenfranchised in education – Why?

- Depends on the school & the individual teacher
- But as a system:
 - Not represented (positively) in curriculum or resources
 - Trying to learn in a culture very different to own
 - Perception/experience is system views you as less than
 - Deficit focus rather than strengths focus
 - Lack of flexibility/inclusiveness

Disenfranchised in education – So what?

- Depends on the school & the individual teacher
- But as a system:
 - Very high levels of disengagement from learning
 - Leads to higher levels of behaviours teachers find challenging & mental health difficulties
 - Suspended and excluded at far higher rates than peers (even for similar behaviours)
 - Attend far more schools for short periods, often 8+ rather than 2-3
 - Leave school younger/with less formal qualifications
 - Leads to low levels of literacy & numeracy

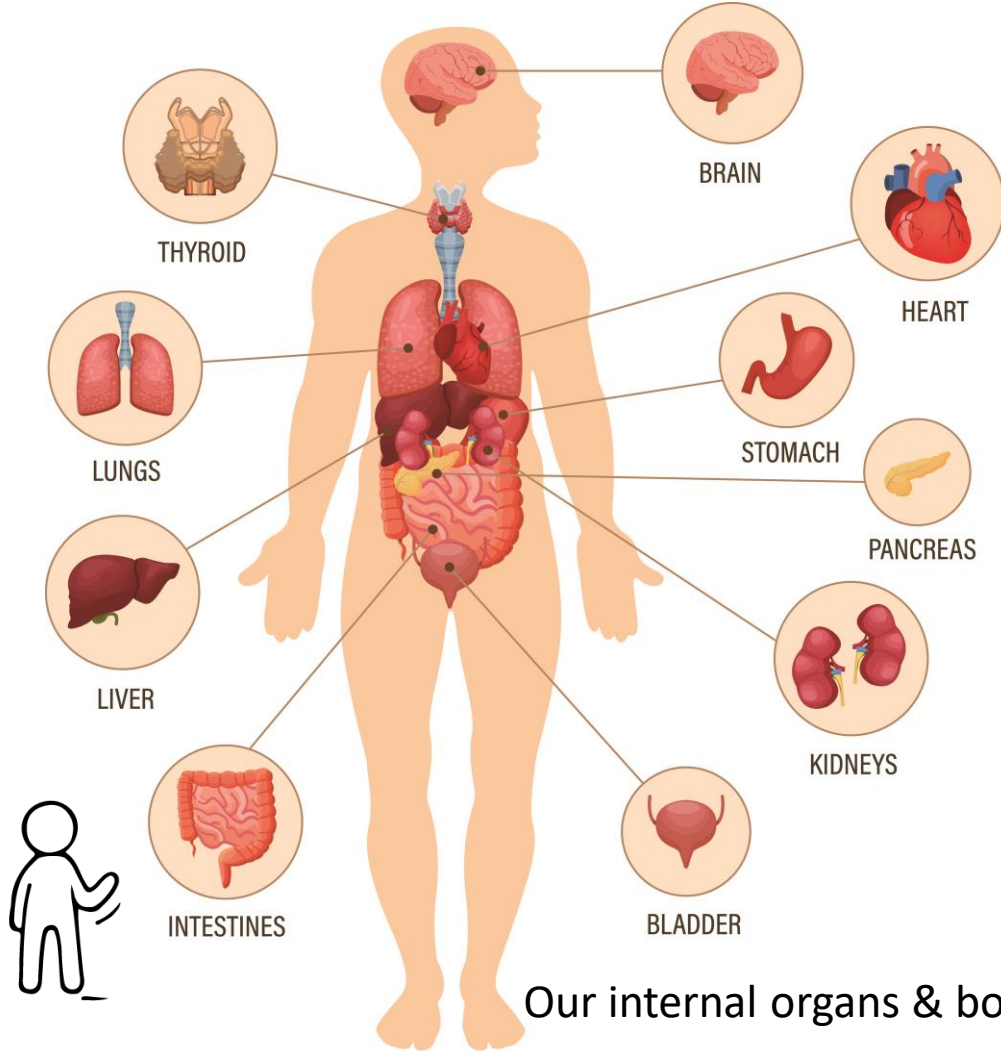
Interoception as an engagement tool in education

What is interoception? How does it engage students in education? Why should we use it? What are the other applications for it?

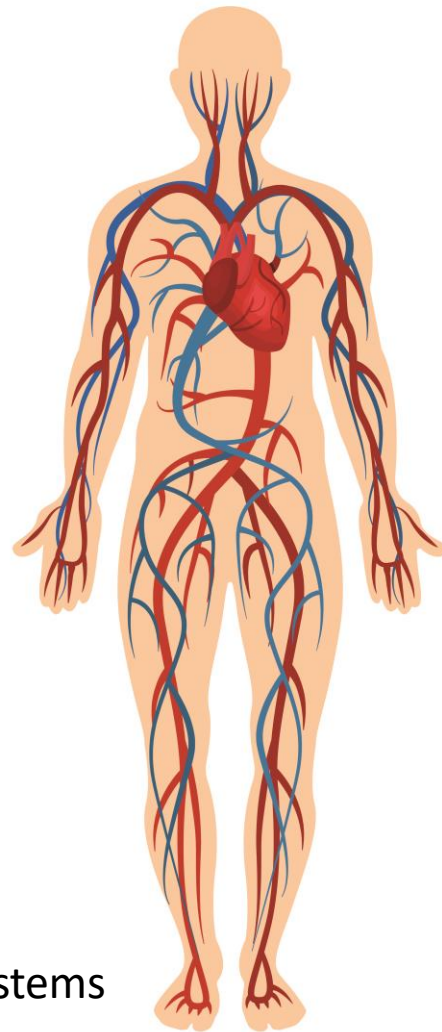
What is interoception?

- How we feel from the inside
- The active sensing or feeling of our internal body signals and interpretation of what they mean (Goodall, 2019).
- These internal body signals let us know when we are hungry, need to go to the toilet, tired etc.





Our internal organs & body systems



Active noticing (interoception)

- Most of the time we don't 'feel' or actively notice our feet – were you noticing them before this slide?
- But when we curl our toes up and really think about what we are feeling, we will notice sensations.
- There are no right and no wrong sensations.



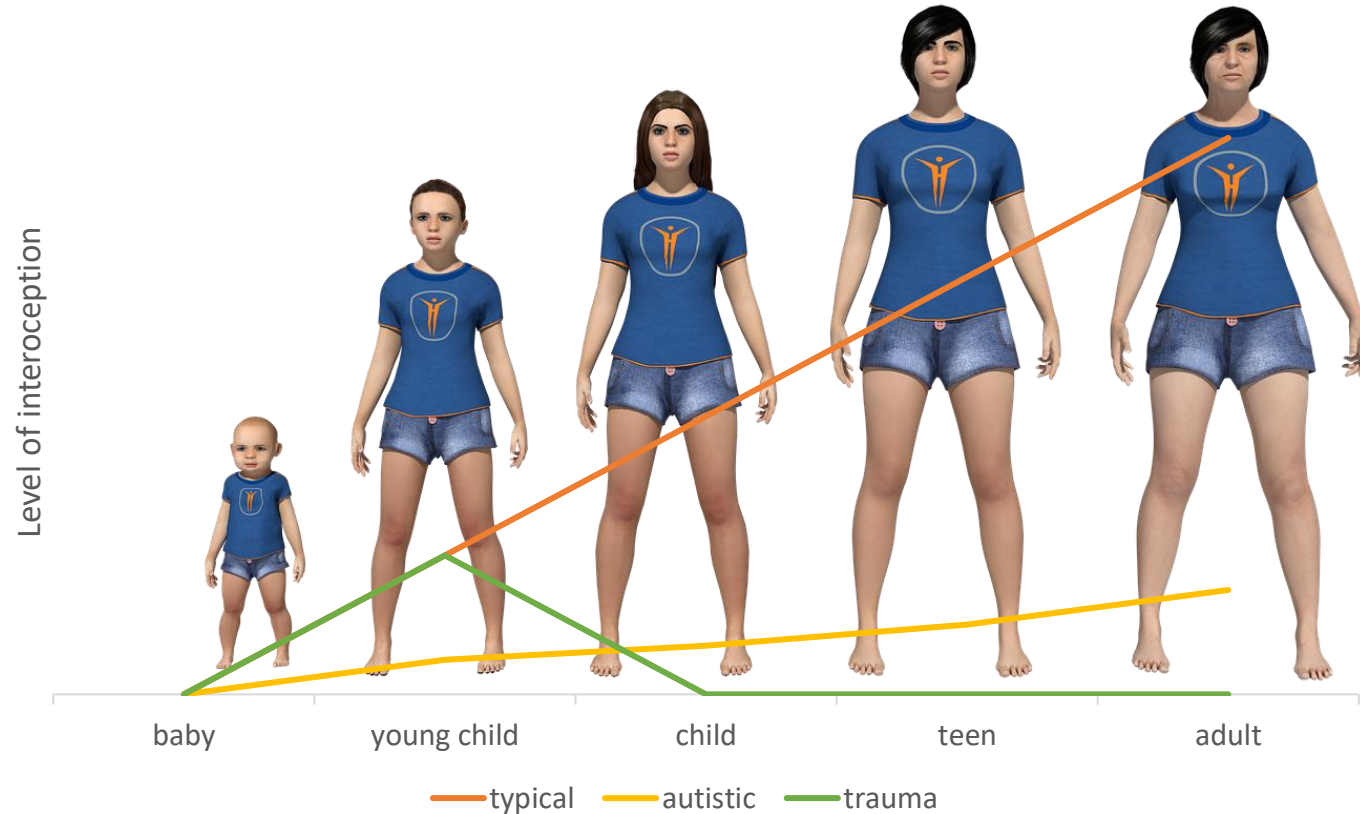


21

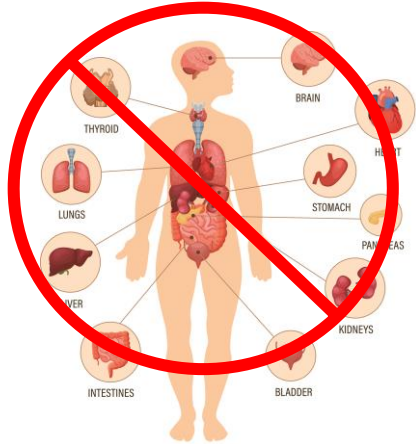
E



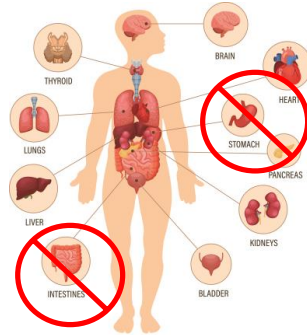
Development of interoception



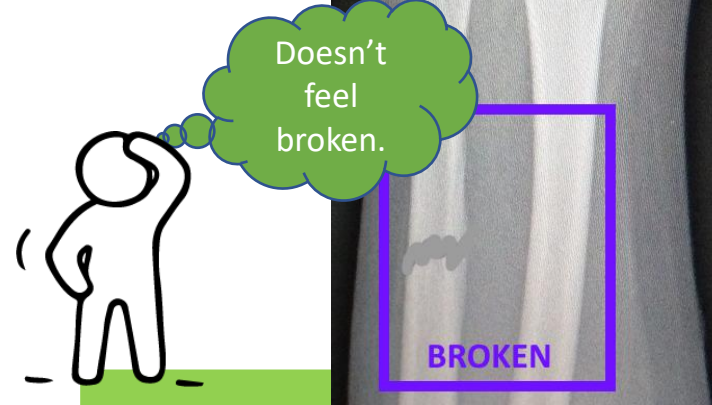
Atypical interoception



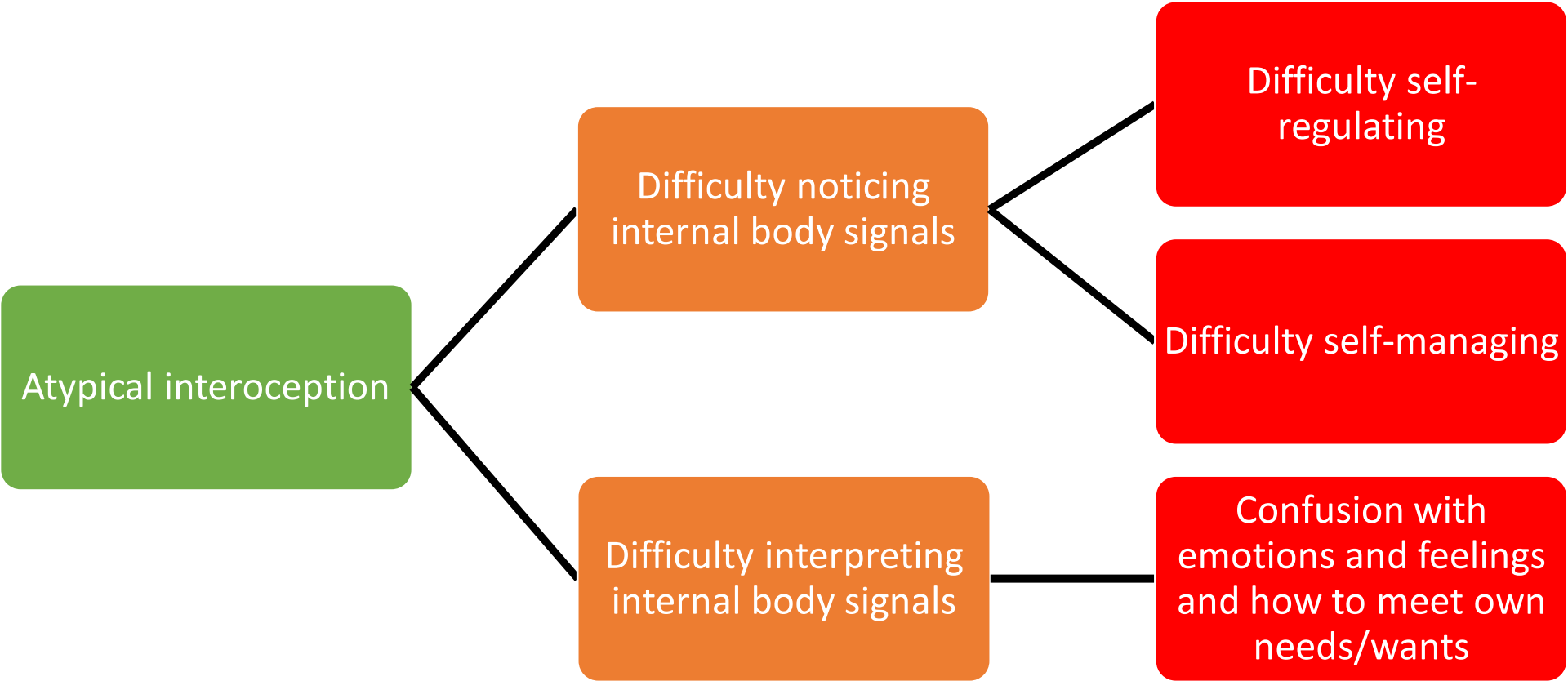
1. May not notice any internal body signals

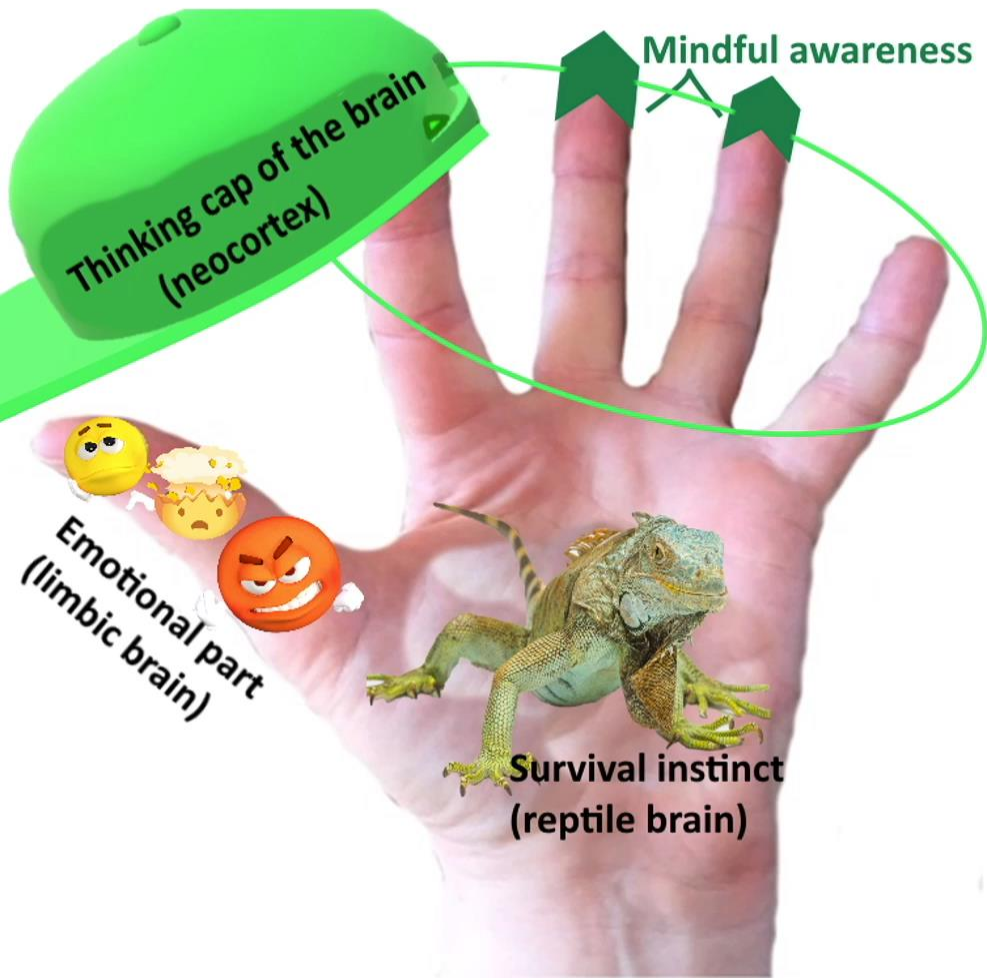


2. May notice some internal body signals but not all, e.g. does not notice when hungry or needs to go to toilet.



3. May notice internal body signals but process them inaccurately, so a little interoceptive signal feels like a lot or a lot of interoceptive signal feels like a little.

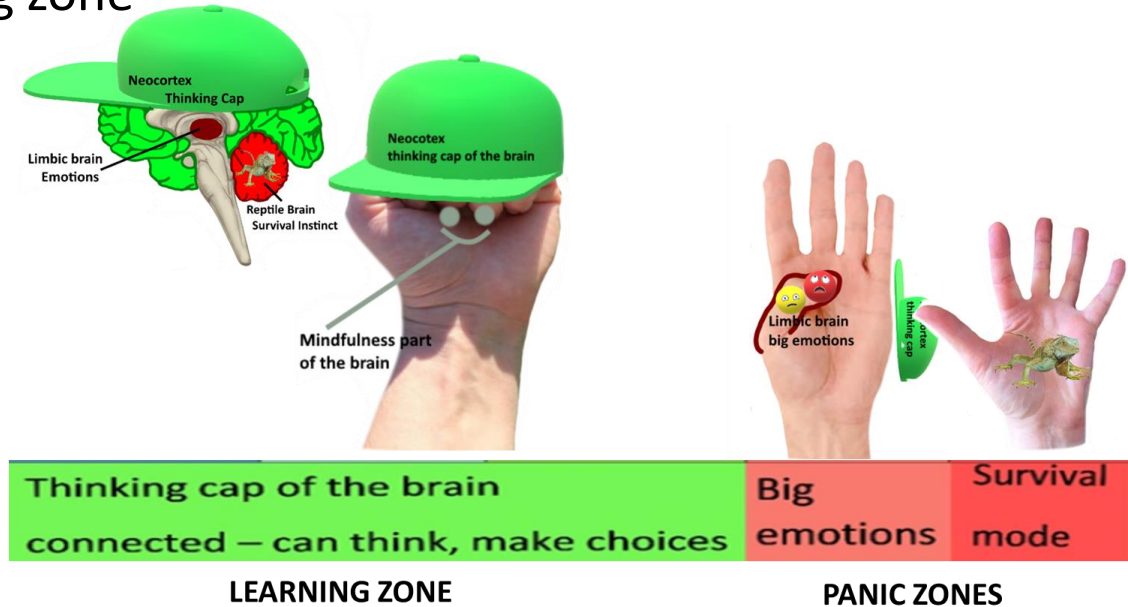




Dan Siegal's (2010) Hand Model of the Brain

Engagement in education

- Requires focus
- Emotional / behavioural self-regulation
- 'being in the learning zone'



Improving engagement in learning

Need students in the 'learning zone' with the thinking cap of the brain connected.

Therefore need to improve:

- Emotional and behavioural self-regulation
 - Which requires improved interoception

Improving interoception



Shown to work by teaching/engaging in interoception activities

- 2-3 times a day for 2-5 minutes or 1x20mins a day
- Over 8-10 weeks
- Also calms **everyone** by returning them to the 'learning zone' with thinking cap of the brain connected.



What is an interoception activity?

1. **Focus** on a body part or state for 10 or more seconds
2. **Move** that body part or change the state of the body... Focus on that change for 30 or more seconds
3. **Think and demonstrate** where you noticed the signal
4. **Repeat** steps 1-2, this time focus on a particular sensation, guided by the group or teacher



What is an interoception activity?

An interoception activity is one that guides the noticing of one or more body state changes. These could be in the area of temperature, muscle tension, heart rate or breathing. In order to ensure the conscious noticing, these four steps are needed.

1. **Focus** on a body part or state for 10 or more seconds
2. **Move** that body part or change the state of the body...
Focus on that change for 30 or more seconds
3. **Think and demonstrate** where you noticed the signal
4. **Repeat** steps 1-2, this time focus on a particular sensation, guided by the group or teacher

Supporting awareness
of thirst – decreasing
dehydration, headaches
etc.



Hydration chart



Use this urine colour chart to give yourself an idea of whether you are drinking enough water or if you are dehydrated. Vitamin and multivitamin supplements may change the colour urine, making it bright yellow or discoloured.

1

3



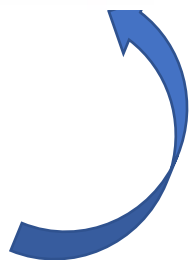
?

2

4



?



Hand Interception activity



*Repeat 1 and 2
focusing
on*

3.

4.

Why do interoception activities?

- Research in South Australian schools has confirmed research from the USA undertaken with adults. Interoception activities have both immediate and longer term benefits.
- In doing Interoception activities, we activate the mindfulness part of the brain, which helps us calm and focus. Over time interoception activities help us to develop the level of interoception required to be able to self-regulate and self-manage.
- When we are connected to our selves, it is easier to connect to others, to place, to learn and engage in activities.
- Being connected to others and to place are protective factors for wellbeing, mental health and life outcomes.

Increasing the interoceptive awareness of students:

Research in South Australian schools demonstrated

- Decreases suspensions and exclusions
 - Increases pro-social behaviours
 - Decreases frequency and intensity of challenging behaviours
 - Increases teaching time and decreases times spent managing behaviours
 - Enables students to be co-regulated more easily as well as enabling students to self-regulate more frequently and more effectively.



healthypossibilities.net@gmail.com