

# The Hand Model of the Brain

This model helps us understand the relationship between some key functions of the brain and our reactions to serious stress.

The fingers represent the **cortex**, or the "thinking" brain. This is where language, recall, reflection, logic, problem solving and planning go on.



The palm represents the **brain stem**, or "survival brain". It is the most primitive part. It activates the flight/ fight/ freeze response, and regulates involuntary bodily functions such as breathing and heart rate



The thumb represents the **limbic** brain, where motions and bodily memories of sensations are found. Words are not used here.



**Experiencing serious stress can cause these parts to stop interacting, and become 'dis-integrated'**

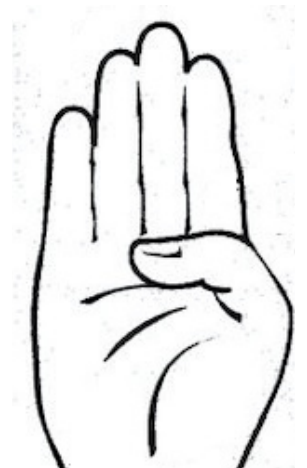
# The goal: an integrated brain

The closed hand represents how the thinking parts of the brain encompass and are in close connection to the emotional and survival parts of the brain. When we are in this state we can regulate our thoughts, feelings and actions, and enjoy life.



Self control and resilience requires strong connections between the cortex, limbic brain and brain stem. These connections allows us to stay calm, think objectively about our situation, remember, and direct our emotions into considered actions.

Without strong connections we can 'dis-integrate', and the thinking part of the brain stops interacting effectively with the other parts. When this occurs we can fail to recall relevant information, ignore logic, miss warning signs, fall victim to strong emotions, and become aggressive, panic, or even collapse.



Directed mindfulness practices bring all the parts of the brain into connection to build integration, self-control, emotional balance and resilience. This gives us the ability to expand our experiences and enrich our own well-being in ways that we determine.

