

# How is our digital culture affecting children and young people's mental health?



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Or, let's take a look at the relationship between external stimuli and our mind/body balance...



...because we know there's a relationship!

1. But, are we asking the right questions to support those relationships?
2. Are we offering children, families and communities the right support?

# Today's conversation and focus...



- Behavioural problems arising from over-use of digital media – hyperactivity, aggression, anti-social behaviour, technology addiction.
- Cyber-bullying.
- Normalising unhealthy lifestyles – anorexia, self-harm, gangs.
- Staying safe on the internet.

# We know this relationship is growing... 'Screen time begins in infancy...'



- On any given day, 29% of **babies under 12 months** are watching TV and videos for an average of 90 minutes. 23% have a television in their bedroom.
- **Between their first and second birthday**, on any given day, 64% of babies and toddlers are watching TV and videos, averaging slightly over 2 hours.
- 36% have a television in their bedroom.
- Little is known about the amount of time children under two currently spend with smartphones and tablets, but **in 2011 there were 3 million downloads of Fisher Price apps alone for infants and toddlers.**

# Data can vary on the amount of exposure...

- Conservative findings show children between the ages of 2 and 5-years-old average 2.2 hours a day.
- Other studies show conclude 4.1 to 4.6 hours a day using screen media.



## As children grow older, screen time increases.

- 8 to 18-year-olds consume an average of 7 hours and 11 minutes of screen media a day—an increase of 2.5 hours in just 10 years



# Information gathering... Public Health England cites research ...



Children and young people are now major users of computers and the internet, with some 85.5% of children belonging to a social networking site.



The proportion of young people playing computer games for two hours or more a night during the week was 55% for boys and 20% for girls in 2010.



PHE suggests that increased screen time and certain internet activity can have a negative impact on young people's emotional wellbeing.



# PHE concluded: Increased screen time and exposure to media is associated with...

- Increased feelings of loneliness
- Reduced feelings of social acceptance
- Conduct problems and aggression

The evidence suggests a 'dose-response' relationship, where each additional hour of viewing increases the likelihood of experiencing socio-emotional problems

See Public Health England, (CMH0085)



## In its latest ChildLine report the NSPCC highlights ...

The potential negative consequences of digital media for young people include:

- During 2013/14 there was an 87 per cent increase in the number of children contacting ChildLine about online bullying.
- From December 2012, ChildLine began to monitor instances when young people specifically mentioned bullying that related to social networking sites, chat rooms or gaming sites.
- From December 2012 to March 2013, ChildLine heard from 1,098 young people who mentioned these platforms.



## Consider this quote:

'I do not believe these children are any different from the children I met when I started in 1980, but they have different means of upsetting each other—girls in particular.

'**The medium is not the cause**, but it certainly facilitates different ways of harming each other, of abusing each other, and that is what young children do.

'Some of these girls have been bullied into a state of despair because their attachments at home are not strong enough, so they rely on their friendships to be a family for them, and when that family crashes they feel they haven't got any, until family then appears like magic in the paediatric ward the next day and maybe some restoration can be created then.'

Dr Sebastian Kraemer (CAMHS consultant psychiatrist), contributing to the House of Commons Health Committee November 2014

# theguardian

- Mental health of children and young people 'at risk in digital age'.
- Cyberbullying and rise in self-harm highlighted by MPs voicing concern over violent video games and sexting.



5 November 2014

## CAMHS provider organisations expressed similar concerns

- Deeply concerning is the proliferation of pro-anorexia websites on the internet.
- In addition to pro self-harm sites which offer information about how to successfully commit suicide.
- Pro-anorexia (or Pro-Ana) websites can negatively impact the eating behaviour of people with and without eating disorders.
- One study of individuals without eating disorders demonstrated that 84% of participants decreased calorific intake by an average of 2,470 calories a week after viewing pro-ED websites.
- We believe there should be more studies into the effect of these websites, and more control should be exerted over their availability online.

The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child recently held a day of discussion about [digital media and children's rights](#).

The first objective for this discussion was to:



*Arrive at a better understanding of how the use of or prevalence of digital media interplays with children's enjoyment of their rights, both in identifying areas in which these technologies may lead to violations of children's rights, and how they can be harnessed to allow children to better claim their rights."*

# Digital Identity Mapping

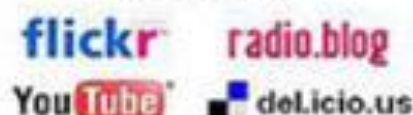
## Expression

*What I say*



## Publication

*What I share*



## Profession

*Where I work*



## Opinion

*What I like*



## Details

*How and where to join me*



## Reputation

*What is being said on me*



## Hobby

*What passionate me*



## Certificates

*Who can certify my identity*



## Purchase

*What I buy*



## Knowledge

*What I know*



## Avatars

*What represent me*



## Audience

*Who I know*



# Children's Rights Alliance for England

*'And here's the rub. It is clear that the internet offers untold opportunities for children, but it also, as the Health Committee report highlights, presents unprecedented dangers.'*

# As does any landscape...

Can we agree the digital world offers a series of landscapes in which there are:

- Opportunities
- Dangers

What you need when entering any new landscape/terrain is a map and in turn, 'map reading' skills.

If travelling by car, we don't look to the car to choose the route, time of arrival, etc. we look to use the car as a vehicle to support our direction of travel.

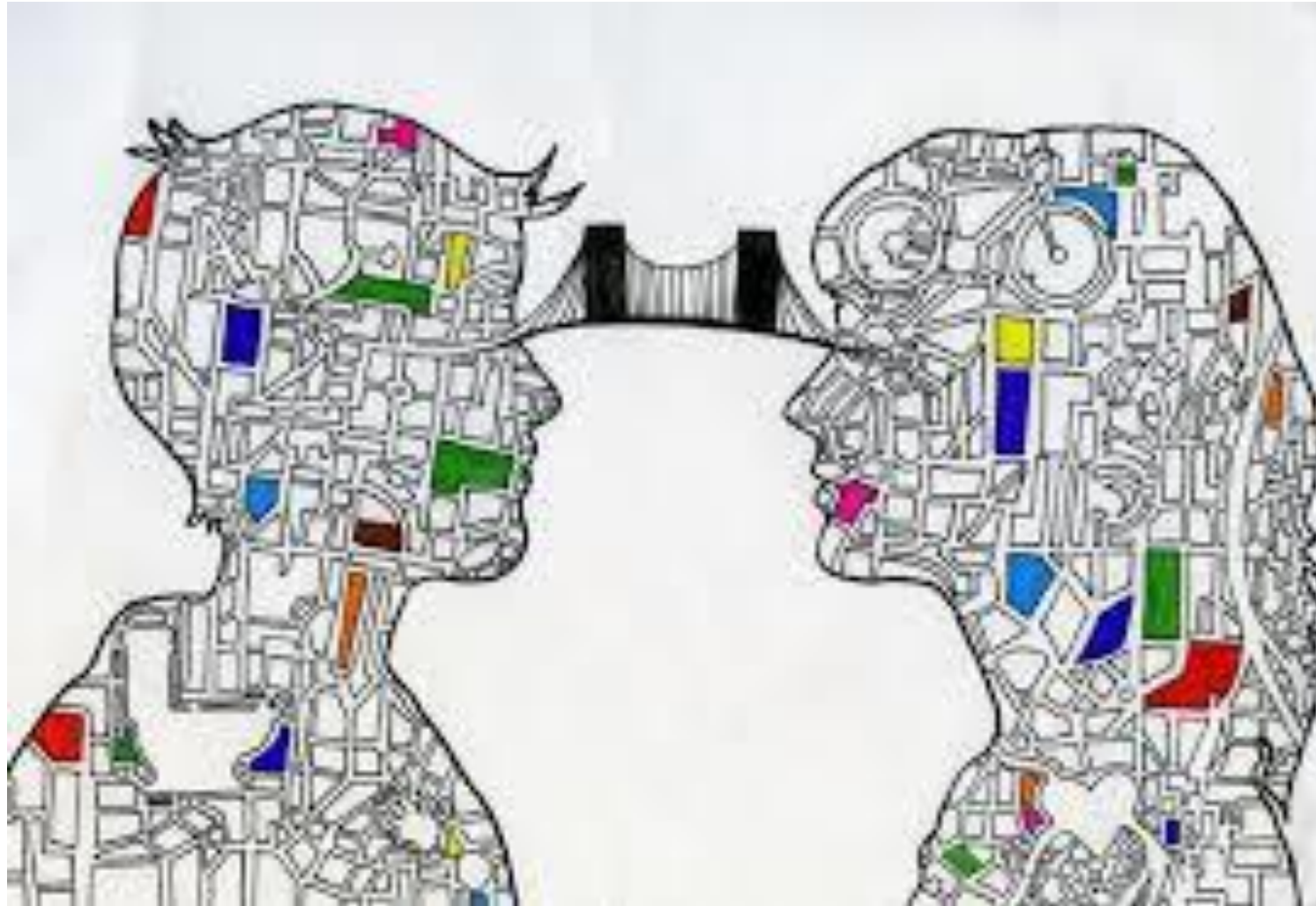
## We need to understand:

- The landscape
- The mode of transportation
- The knowledge to drive the transportation
- A view of our destination

If you wander aimlessly, and the landscape can expand and contract, this can create a sense of powerlessness on the part of the driver and a whole range of potential accidents can occur.



Take away either the boy or girl and replace with a piece of digital equipment, a machine...



# The landscape

The landscape is our relationship with whatever the piece of digital equipment is at the time we are using it to reach our destination. Be that...

- watching a film
- finding out about a holiday
- finding out about diets and body weight
- finding out how to self-harm safely
- finding out about sex
- finding out about who is like me.

When we are scared we use grandiose language like ‘the digital world’ as if it’s something out there, separate to us.

It’s something we, our whole being, is having a relationship with, and we need to equip children, young people and adults alike, to know how to take care of themselves when using a digital technological appliance.

# The mode of transportation

- Neurological developments
- Somatic experiencing
- Trauma work

All can help us make sense of the mode of transportation used to have a relationship with the digital world.

# Let's try something...

- Notice your thoughts
- Notice your feelings
- Notice your physical sensations















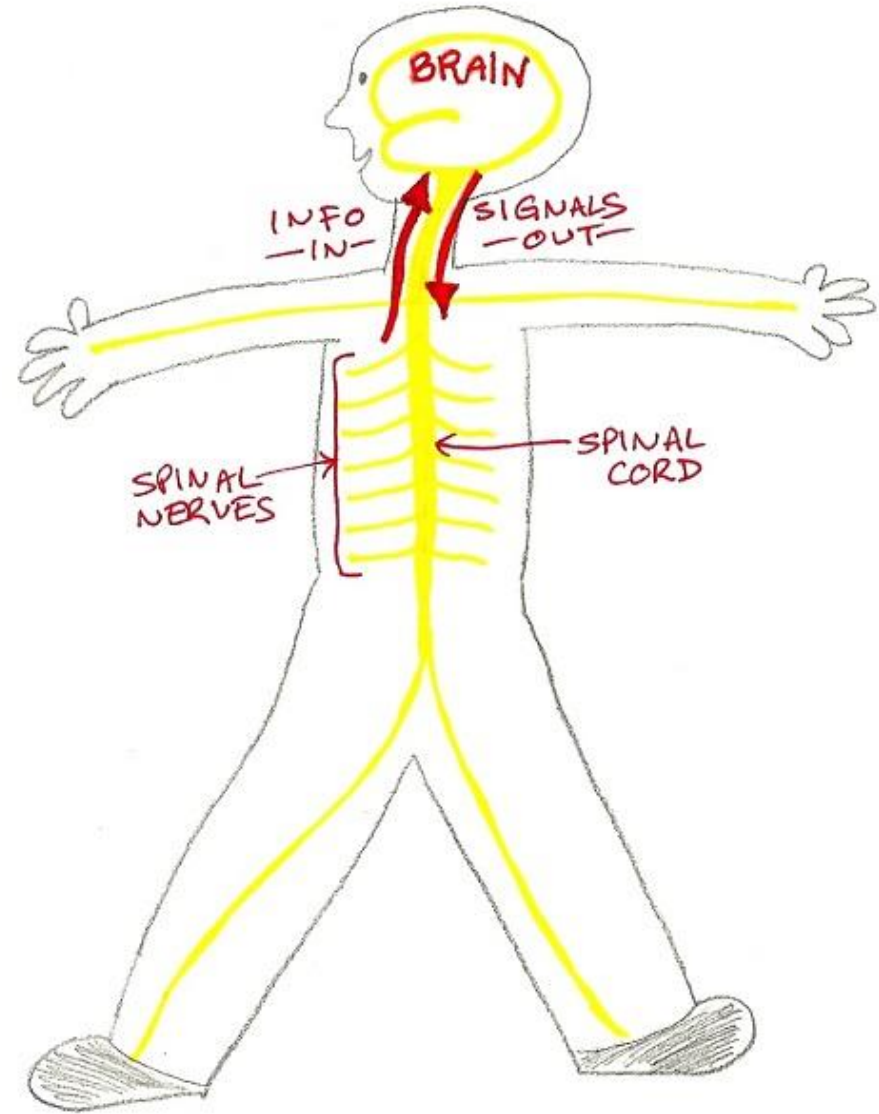




# The knowledge to drive the transportation

- We need to understand our brains and their relationship with our nervous system and in turn the emotions provoked.
- We need to recognise our vulnerabilities and how some of us will be less robust than others and know why.
- Importantly we need to share this information with children and young people.

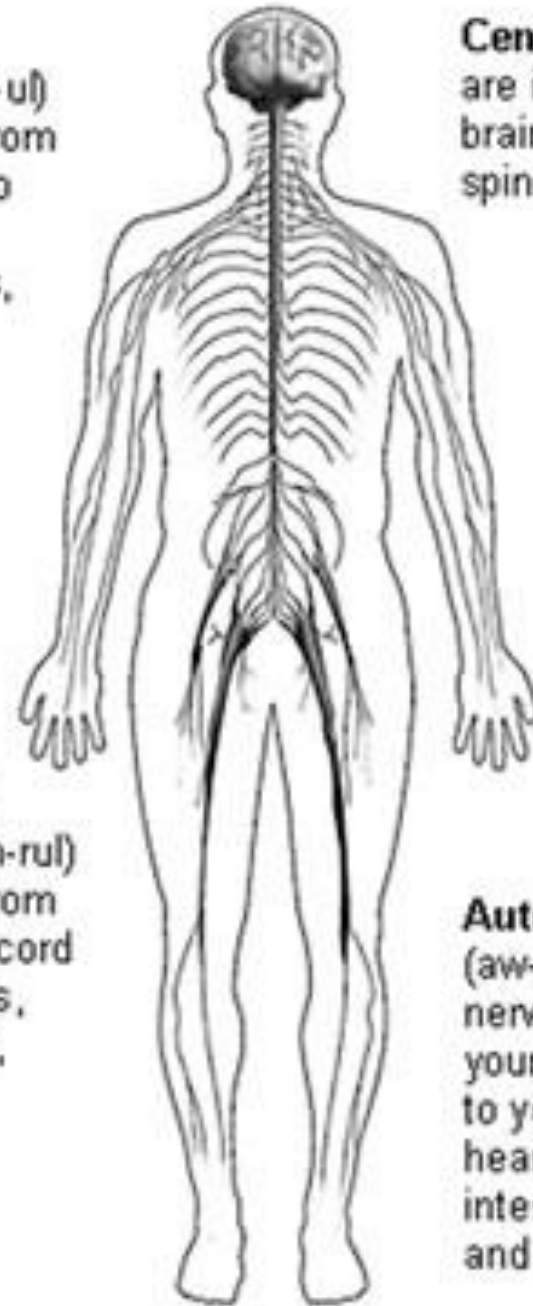
Let's look at our nervous system...



# A look at our nervous system

**Cranial**  
(KRAY-nee-ul)  
nerves go from  
your brain to  
your eyes,  
mouth, ears,  
and other  
parts of  
your head.

**Central** nerves  
are in your  
brain and  
spinal cord.

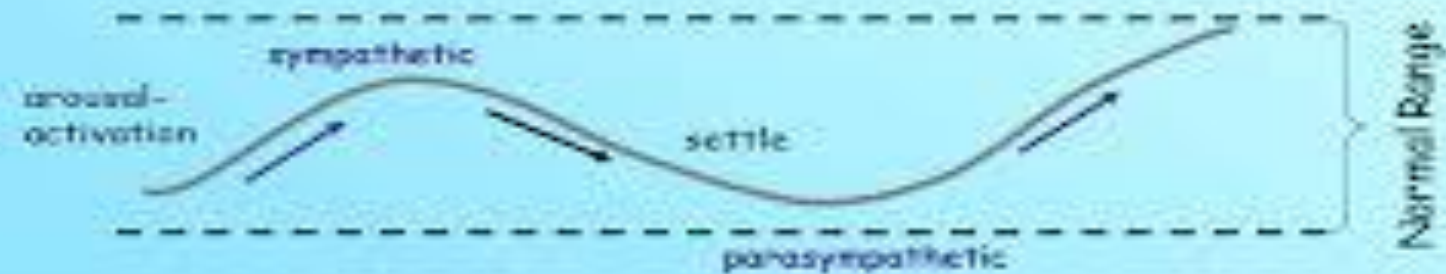


**Peripheral**  
(puh-RIF-uh-ruul)  
nerves go from  
your spinal cord  
to your arms,  
hands, legs,  
and feet.

**Autonomic**  
(aw-toh-NOM-ik)  
nerves go from  
your spinal cord  
to your lungs,  
heart, stomach,  
intestines, bladder,  
and sex organs.

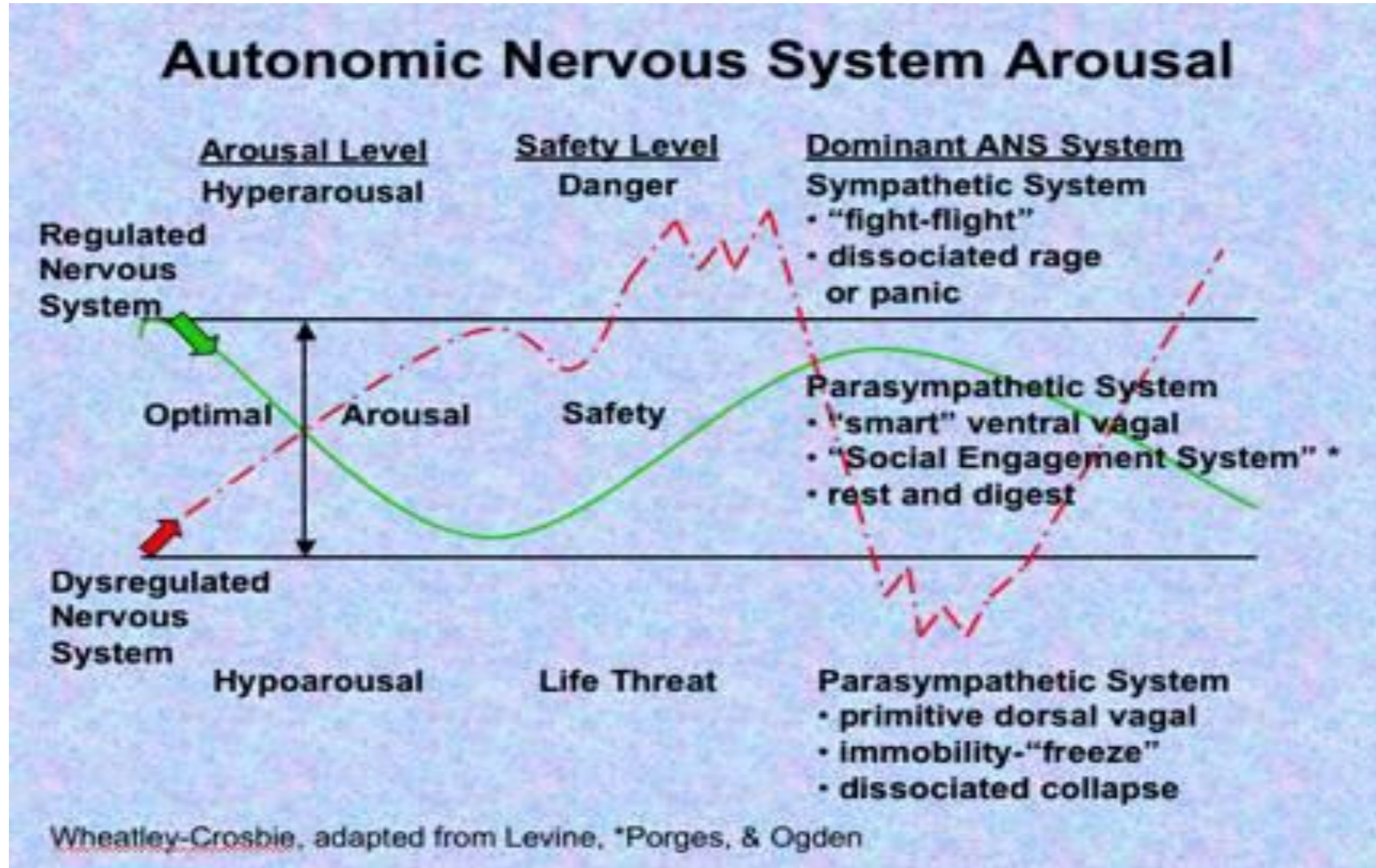
Does our digital culture impact our nervous system?

## A Healthy Nervous System





# The ANS response to trauma



**THE ANS CONTROLS ALL OF THESE SYSTEMS  
( & THEIR INTER-RELATIONSHIPS):**



# The need to slow down is key...

A child's brain is still developing and growing.

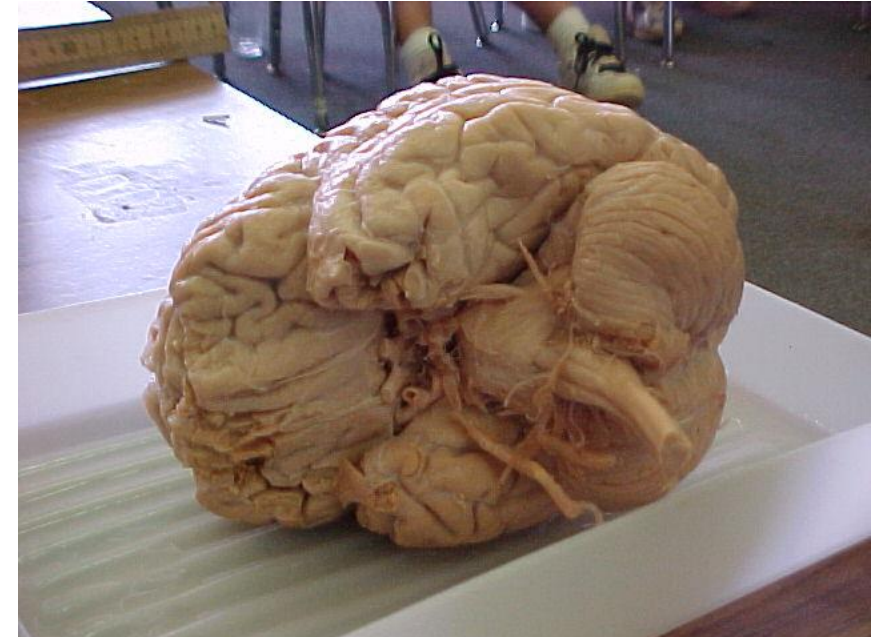
They are not well equipped to deal with stress.

Emotional self-regulation becomes erratic.

Growth of autism.

The need to soothe the survival mode is critical.

Growth of mindfulness.





1. To address the impact of our digital culture we need to equip children with an understanding of their own internal map, rather than endlessly examining and evidencing the impact; we know it can have a great and a horrendous impact.
2. If we don't I fear children will continue to subsume their sense of self into this ever-growing, ever exciting, excessively stimulating world, to their detriment .

Thank you and go well

