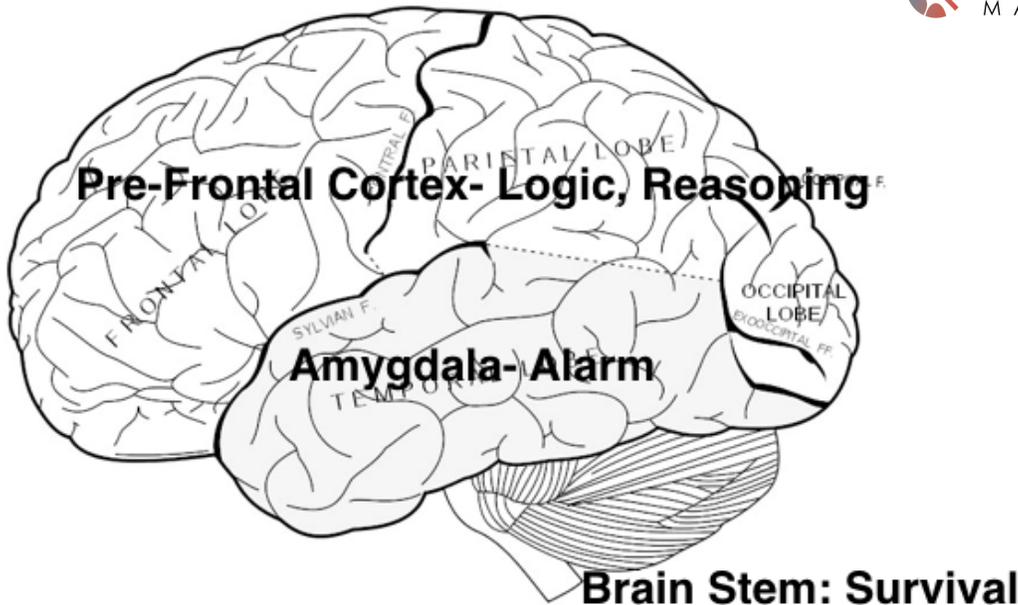


# A SIMPLE UNDERSTANDING OF THE BRAIN



- **The Brain Stem: The Part that Keeps Us Alive.** According to William C. Shiel Jr., “The brain stem controls the flow of messages between the brain and the rest of the body, and it also controls basic body functions such as breathing, swallowing, heart rate, blood pressure, consciousness, and whether one is awake or sleepy.” The brain stem keeps us alive. It oversees the things we do without thinking, like breathing, heartbeat, pulse, blood flow. The brainstem is also where we retreat when we are alarmed, in danger, or experiencing something intense.
- **The Amygdala: The Brain’s Alarm System.** The amygdala filters sensory input to assess potential risk before that information is transferred to the rest of the brain for further processing. The amygdala functions as an alarm system as well as the pleasure sensor, and is thought to play important roles in emotion and behavior.<sup>2</sup> It is best known for its role in processing fear, however it is also responsible for much of our human behavior. When our amygdala senses the smell of Grandma’s apple pie, it processes that input to quickly put our mind at ease. When it senses the smell of smoke, it alerts the brain to potential danger. If danger truly exists, our body becomes prepared to get to safety. If danger doesn’t exist—for instance, if the smell of smoke is a campfire—the alarm will quiet and the rest of our brain will process the smell as something anticipated and potentially fun. For people with trauma history, the amygdala plays a crucial role in how they respond to certain high-intensity situations.

- **The Prefrontal Cortex: Where Logic and Reasoning Live.** The prefrontal cortex is located at the front of the brain and is responsible for a person's executive-functioning skills. Executive functioning is responsible for impulse control, planning, decision-making, problem-solving, self-control, and strategizing for long-term goals. Our prefrontal cortex gets us from point "A" to point "B" in the most efficient and successful way possible. Our executive-functioning skills are especially important when it comes to tasks such as getting ready for work or school, following a list of chores or errands, and preparing for the day in time to meet our daily demands. The prefrontal cortex is also where our calm, collected, and reasonable natures live.

## Notes:

A large, empty gray rectangular area intended for taking notes.

# Trauma Knowledge 101 with Kristin Berry

## F.L.I.P. IT



- **F- Feelings:** We notice that our child is growing frustrated for example, so we respond with a statement such as *"It looks like you're feeling really frustrated right now. Why is that?"* (**Identify the feeling, begin to inquire**)
- **L- Limits:** We say to the child, *"I understand that you frustrated, but we can't push someone when we feel this way."* (**Identify the behavioral response and set the limit**)
- **I- Inquiry:** After we've set the limits, we respond with *"What can we do to make you feel better?"* Or, *"We can't push others when we feel frustrated, but what's something we can do instead?"* (**Inquire Into the behavior and continue to reinforce the limit**)
- **P- Prompt:** We then let them know what we're going to do to help them process through the emotion/feelings. Ask, *"Would you like me to sit here with you while you calm down?"* (**Once you've Identified the origin of the emotion or behavior, you prompt them toward a different response**)

From the Devereux Center for Resilient Children: <https://centerforresilientchildren.org/>

## Notes: