STUDENT VOICE · DESIGN CHALLENGE

My design journal













Designer name (optional)

Class / group

You're in control. Pass · take a break · work alone · share only what you want. You don't have to put anything personal in here.

01 · EXPLORE

My design challenge

A digital check-in used by young people needs new artwork and ideas. You're on the design team, and your work could end up in it.

48 Emotions — design how feelings look.	**9 Places — show where check-ins happen.**	**+ What might help? — invent tools people would use.**

What would make a check-in feel like it was made for young people?

Draw it, write it, or collage it.

02 · EXPLORE

My choices

Circle as many as you like. You can change your mind any time.

I want to work on

Emotion artwork · Context artwork · 'What might help?' tools

I'll make it with

Drawing · Painting · Collage · Pencil & marker · Cut paper · Shapes & symbols · A style of my own

I work best

On my own · With a partner · In a group · With music on · Moving around

One thing I want to get out of this

03 · BRAIN LAB

Your brain is under construction

From about 10 to 25, your brain gets its biggest upgrade since you were a toddler. It's a window, and what you do with it counts.

Rewiring

Pathways you use get stronger. Unused ones get pruned. Practice builds your brain.

The coach comes online last

The prefrontal cortex handles pausing and planning. It keeps developing into your mid-20s.

Built for right now

The young brain is wired for new experiences, friends and big ideas. Perfect conditions for creating.

> *"We continually change, and our brains continually change throughout our lives."*
> Professor Mark Williams OAM, cognitive neuroscientist

Four superpowers of the young brain

Neuroscientist Dan Siegel says the young brain brings four superpowers. Circle the one you'll bring to this project.

- ☐ Emotional spark — feeling things strongly gives energy and meaning.
- ☐ Social engagement — connecting with others, building a group.
- ☐ Novelty seeking — wanting new, different and exciting.
- ☐ Creative exploration — seeing things in new ways, thinking outside the box.

Why that one? Draw or write it.

The science: *Adolescence is a sensitive period of major brain development, not a problem to be managed (Blakemore, 2018). The ESSENCE model comes from Siegel's Brainstorm (2013).*

What even is an emotion?

Emotions are signals your brain and body make together. They help people notice what matters, stay safe and connect with others. They're information, not instructions. Every emotion has a job.

> *"We are not thinking machines that feel; rather, we are feeling machines that think."*
> Antonio Damasio, neuroscientist

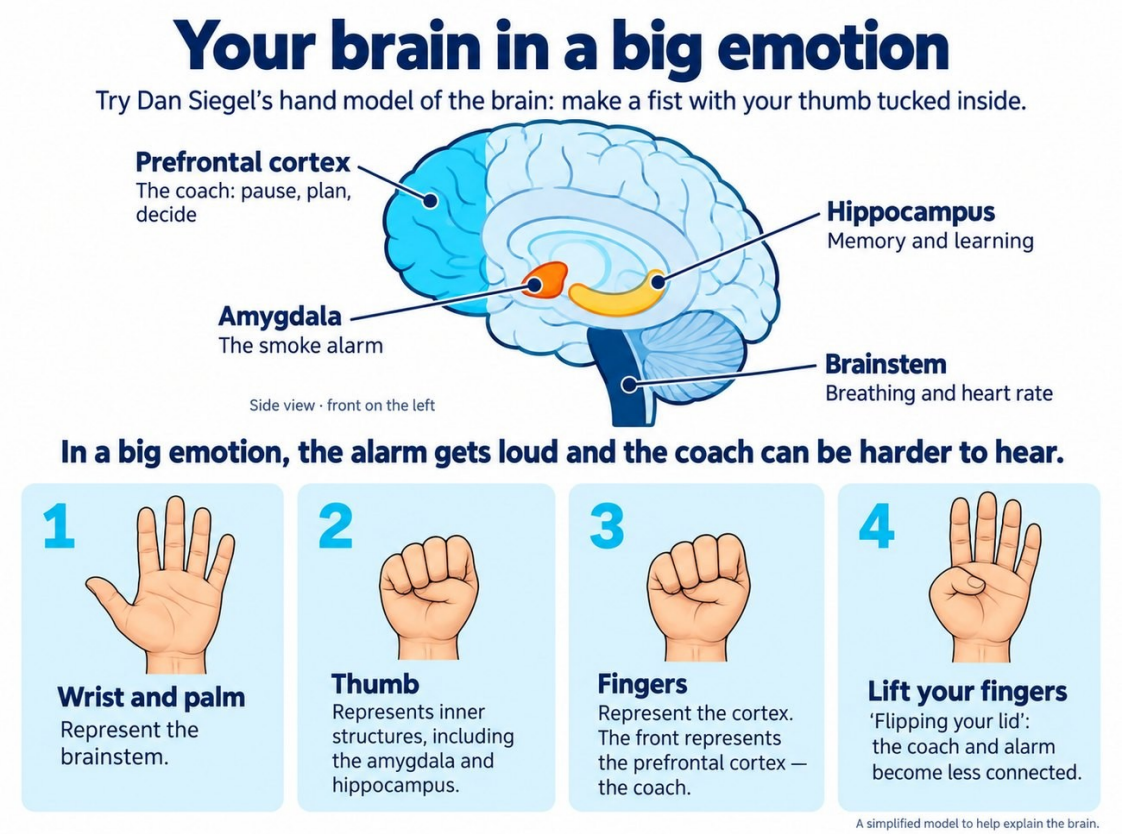
Emotion as a messenger

What might each one be trying to tell someone, and how could a design show it?

Emotion	Its message might be...	A design could show it by...
Fear	"Something might not be safe."	Sharp edges, shrinking shapes

Why you can't think straight in a big emotion

When the alarm is loud, the brain switches to protect mode. It's fast and powerful, and it isn't built for maths, essays or big decisions. That's biology, not weakness.



Attention narrows Focus locks onto the threat. Everything else fades out.	**Memory drops** The brain stores less new information, so learning is harder.
Decisions speed up React first, think later. Choices can feel automatic.	**Body revs up** Heart races, breathing speeds up, muscles tense, stomach flips.

> *"The brain does not distinguish between feeling unsafe and being unsafe."*
>
> The neuroscience of learning — Life Skills GO, with Professor Mark Williams OAM

The good news: it's a wave

Emotions rise, peak and settle, and you can help them settle. Draw a visual that shows an emotion rising, peaking and settling. Could it work in the check-in?

__The science:__ High stress weakens prefrontal cortex function (Arnsten, 2009) and changes how well we learn and remember (Vogel & Schwabe, 2016).

06 · BRAIN LAB

Reset lab: body first, brain follows

Calming the body sends a 'safe' signal back up to the brain. Try each tool for about 60 seconds, then rate it as a designer. Skip any you don't want to try.

Tool	How	Rate it
Physiological sigh	Two breaths in through the nose, then one long, slow breath out. Repeat 3 times.	☐ Yes ☐ Maybe ☐ No
Long out-breath	In for 4, out for 6. Longer out than in.	☐ Yes ☐ Maybe ☐ No
Move it	Walk, shake out your hands, stretch, 10 star jumps.	☐ Yes ☐ Maybe ☐ No
Cool down	Cold water on your hands or face.	☐ Yes ☐ Maybe ☐ No
5-4-3-2-1	5 things you see, 4 hear, 3 touch, 2 smell, 1 taste.	☐ Yes ☐ Maybe ☐ No
Name it to tame it	Put a word to the feeling. In your head is fine.	☐ Yes ☐ Maybe ☐ No
Music	A track that slows you down, or one that burns energy off.	☐ Yes ☐ Maybe ☐ No
Connect	Be near someone you trust.	☐ Yes ☐ Maybe ☐ No

Rework one: pick a tool and redesign it so more young people would actually use it.

You don't need to share how any tool felt for you.

The science: *A 2023 Stanford study found five minutes a day of cyclic sighing improved mood more than mindfulness meditation (Balban et al.). Slow breathing with a longer exhale calms the nervous system (Zaccaro et al., 2018). Naming feelings reduces amygdala activity (Lieberman et al., 2007).*

You always have a choice

> *"Everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of the human freedoms, to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one's own way."*
>
> Viktor Frankl, psychiatrist and Holocaust survivor, Man's Search for Meaning (1946)

Big emotions happen to everyone. What comes next is where choice lives. Once the body settles, the coach, your prefrontal cortex, can reconnect and help you choose.

Stop → Breathe → Notice → Choose

Choice point

Sam gets a message that makes them furious, five minutes before class.

React: if the alarm drives, what might happen next?

Respond: after a pause, what could Sam choose instead?

Design a 'pause button' icon.

The science: *Reappraisal, choosing a different way to see a situation, is one of the most effective ways to manage emotion (Gross, 2002). Choice and autonomy boost motivation and wellbeing in young people (Ryan & Deci, 2017).*

Kindness, empathy and gratitude are brain science

These aren't just nice ideas. They change the brain and body of the person doing them, not just the person receiving them.

Kindness Helping others switches on the brain's reward system. Small acts count.	**Empathy** Feeling with someone. It's a skill, and it grows with practice.	**Gratitude** Noticing good things. Regular gratitude practice is linked to higher wellbeing.

Design a small act of kindness

A card, sticker or message another student could find. What would it say or show?

The science: Gratitude practice improved wellbeing across studies (Emmons & McCullough, 2003). Acts of kindness increased wellbeing and peer acceptance in young people (Layous et al., 2012). Giving activates reward areas of the brain (Moll et al., 2006).

09 · EXPLORE

Emotion explorer

My emotion:

Milder version	Similar feelings	Stronger version

Name it

Five words that are more precise than your emotion.

Texture and movement

Circle any.

Smooth · Rough · Sharp · Soft · Heavy · Fuzzy · Cracked · Metallic · Flowing

Fast · Slow · Exploding · Floating · Spinning · Falling · Growing · Shrinking

The science: *Go further: find how two artists or cultures show this emotion differently. Could it mean something different to someone else?*

My SIFT map

Pick a character from a film, a game, a book, or one you invent. Map what they might notice. Draw, write or use symbols.

My character:

S — Sensations What might they notice in their body?
I — Images What pictures or symbols come to mind?
F — Feelings What other feelings sit nearby?
T — Thoughts What might they be thinking?

Go further: map the same emotion for a second, very different character. What changes?

11 · IMAGINE

Emotion storyboard

Work through the nine frames. Rough sketches are the point.

1 Emotion — which one?	2 Body — where felt?	3 Symbols — shapes, objects
4 Name it — precise word	5 Texture — how it feels	6 Movement — how it moves
7 Thoughts — a thought bubble	8 Visual idea — rough sketch	9 What might help? — tools, places, people

12 · IMAGINE

Sketch it

Symbol sprint · 5 symbols · 2 minutes. Three different ideas. Star ☆ your strongest.

Idea A ☆	Idea B ☆	Idea C ☆

Original only — no game characters, logos, celebrities or copied art.

13 · IMAGINE

Remix it

Take your starred idea and rework it. Try a whole new style — street art, manga, hand-drawn, vector, collage.

I changed

Circle any.

Texture · Size · Style · Material · Movement · Shape

My remix

Go further: draw it three ways — as a tiny phone icon, full screen, and as a two-second animation (show the movement with arrows).

Context explorer

Where do check-ins happen? Tick one. These are rough examples in different styles — yours will be better.

 ☐ With my friends	 ☐ At home	 ☐ In the classroom
 ☐ On the grounds	 ☐ Online	 ☐ Gaming
 ☐ Break times	*(your design)* ☐ Leaving school	 ☐ On the way to school

Three details that say ‘this place’

No real people, logos or real locations.

15 · CREATE

Emotion + context

Context remix: put your emotion in three different places. Redesign it each time. What has to change?

Place 1
Place 2
Place 3

Go further: design one visual style that could work across all nine places.

What might help?

Tick ideas a young person might actually use. Put a ↻ next to ones that need a redesign.

- ☐ Music
- ☐ Movement
- ☐ Drawing
- ☐ Taking space
- ☐ Talking to someone trusted
- ☐ Drinking water
- ☐ Slow breathing
- ☐ Going outside
- ☐ Sensory tools
- ☐ Changing environment
- ☐ Writing
- ☐ Smaller steps
- ☐ Sport
- ☐ Stretching
- ☐ Connecting with someone
- ☐ Quiet time
- ☐ Creative activities
- ☐ Grounding
- ☐ Asking for help

My tool

Rework one above, or invent your own.

Why could it help?

When would someone use it? Alone, with someone, or both?

Who could they go to if it wasn't enough?

17 · CREATE

Prototype

Make a clean version of your best idea. Draw it in the box to see how it could look in the check-in.

Label my design choices

Student testing

Swap with someone. Don't tell them the emotion.

Tester 1

I think this shows...

The first thing I noticed...

This works because...

What if you tried...

Tester 2

I think this shows...

Would it work tiny? ☐ Yes ☐ Not yet

What if you tried...

Different guesses are useful data, not failure. Feedback is about the design, never the person.

Version 2

Before	After

The one change that made the biggest difference

Go further: what would you test next if you had another week?

My final design

Draw, paint or collage it here. Bigger work? Attach it to this page.

This shows:

21 · SHARE

My design story

Tell the design team about your work. Write it, draw it as a comic strip, or tell someone who can scribe it for you.

I made...

I chose these shapes, symbols and words because...

I hope another young person sees it and...

Talk about your design choices. You don't need to share anything personal.

Submission checklist

- ☐ My design is original — no game characters, logos, celebrities, copied art or app icons.
- ☐ There's nothing personal in my artwork or design story.
- ☐ It shows feelings through shape, symbol, character or metaphor — nothing graphic.
- ☐ My design story is done (written, drawn or scribed).
- ☐ My consent form is signed.

How I want my name to appear

Circle one.

Full name · First name only · Initials · Anonymous

You contributed to something real.

Before you go — name it, share it, settle it

Right now I feel...

One way I could share that:

One thing that helps me settle:

If a big emotion ever feels like too much, you don't have to handle it alone. Talk to someone you trust at school.