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Inside your head is your brain.

Each person’s brain is very different.

The brain is like your control centre.

The brain is where your personality, your actions and emotions are controlled.

The brain also controls your memory, your language and your creativity.

The brain is very important
   It makes us who we are.
PART 1. HOW THE BRAIN WORKS

Your Brain
Each part of the brain has a special job to do. This picture shows where each different job is controlled in the brain.

The **light green** area is the control centre of the brain. This area controls the rest of the brain. It controls your thinking, your emotions and your actions. This is where you put together your stories.

At the top of the brain, the **red** area is sent messages FROM the body like how the body is moving or how it is feeling.

The **purple** area sends messages TO the body telling it how and when to move.

The **pink** area organises your memory.

The **blue** area in the middle of the brain is very important for controlling mood, like how happy or sad you feel.

The **orange** area at the bottom of the brain balances your body both when it is moving and when it is still.

The **dark green** area at the back of the brain is sent information from the eyes and puts together a picture in the brain of what you see through your eyes.

The **yellow** area is the ‘fear’ centre of the brain. It is where big worries or feeling scared comes from.

The small **dark blue** area controls things like how well you sleep or eat and your body temperature.

The **brown** area is like a ‘housekeeping’ area. It makes sure that all the jobs of the brain are getting done properly.

These different areas are always working together and talking to each other.
PART 1. HOW THE BRAIN WORKS

Jobs of the Brain

- CONTROL CENTRE: stories & thinking
- move body
- feel body
- see (with eyes)
- makes sure everything is done
- food
- sleep
- body temperature
- memory
- balance body
- mood

FEAR (worries, scared)
This picture shows how messages go around the brain and body.

A message goes from the finger to the ‘feel body’ (blue) area of the brain saying that the finger is hot.

A message is then sent to the ‘move body’ (orange) area saying that the finger needs to move away.

The ‘move body’ area then sends the message to the finger telling it to move away.

The finger then moves away from the fire.

These messages travel so fast that you don’t even notice them.
PART 1. HOW THE BRAIN WORKS

Messages Go Between Brain & Body

- move body
- feel body
- move finger
- fire

HOT!
But how do these messages get around the brain and body?

They are carried by the *nervous system*.

The *nervous system* is the name for the brain and all the nerves that join the brain with the body.

The nervous system carries messages from the brain to the body and the body to the brain.

This controls everything you do.

The nervous system is like your body’s ‘*knowledge system*’.

There are two ways that messages are carried around the nervous system.

Part of it is *electrical*, like electricity. And the other part is *chemical*, carried by natural chemicals in the body. We will see how this happens.
The Nervous System

carries the messages
Inside the nervous system are millions and millions of very small brain cells called ‘neurons’.

The messages go through these neurons to get around the nervous system, like electricity through wires.

This is the electrical part of your nervous system.

Neurons are too small for your eyes to see. But this is a photo of two neurons taken under a very powerful microscope. In reality they are much smaller than this.

The message has to ‘jump’ across the gap to pass the message on to the next neuron. This gap is called a ‘synapse’.
For the message to get to the next neuron, it has to jump across a gap called the ‘synapse’.
The **synapse** is the chemical part of the nervous system.

In the **synapse**, messages that were electrical become chemical so they can get to the next neuron and become electrical again.

This picture shows how this happens. The natural chemicals (in green) are pushed from the end of the neuron into the **synapse**.

Then they move across to the next neuron where there are special cells (in blue) that catch them.

When these chemicals get to the next neuron, they start a new electrical signal in that neuron.

So the messages change from *electrical* to *chemical* and back to *electrical*.

This way the messages get passed on from neuron to neuron.
The messages are carried across the synapse by natural chemicals in the body.
Your body makes lots of different chemicals that keep your nervous system working properly.

Keeping these chemicals balanced makes sure your nervous system is balanced.

When you are healthy, the chemicals in your nervous system are balanced like water in a healthy river system.

That way food can get to all parts of your body and waste can get taken away.

Like a healthy river system where clean water gets to all of the plants and animals along the river, keeping them all healthy.
Balance

In a healthy person, all the chemicals in the nervous system are balanced

Like water in a healthy river system
Some of these things can cause balance problems in your nervous system:

- drinking grog, sniffing petrol, using gunja or other drugs
- too much worries or stress
- family troubles
- bad sleep
- bad food
- getting sick.

Too much of these things can cause balance problems in everyone, but in some people it happens much easier than in others.

Sometimes it runs in the family.
PAR 2. PROBLEMS WITH THE BRAIN

**Balance Problems**

Some things can make the balance no good:

- Drugs and alcohol
- Sniffing petrol
- Gunja
- Stress
- Bad sleep
- Bad food
- Family history
These pictures show what happens when there is balance problems in the nervous system.

In this picture the wrong type of chemicals, shown in red, come along and pass into the next neuron instead of the green natural chemicals.

Balance problems happen when there are too many or not enough chemicals in the synapse.

This changes the message that gets passed on to the next neuron.
 Too many wrong chemicals in the synapse
Now a different message is passed to the next neuron.

This changes the messages that are sent all around the nervous system.

Instead of healthy messages that make your body and brain work properly, confused messages are sent around the brain and body.

This way, the balance of the nervous system is no good.
Confused messages are now sent around the brain and body.
Now the messages can’t get where they were going or they go to the wrong places.

Then the nervous system is like a river system with dirty water or water that doesn’t flow.

The wrong messages are sent around the brain and body. The brain and body can’t talk to each other properly.

When there is balance problems in a person’s brain and body, they may get a mental illness.

There are different types of mental illness.

With a mental illness, the balance is no good and confused messages are sent around the brain and body.

These confused messages mean that a person can feel sad when they should feel happy, or they can see or hear things that aren’t really there.

Some people get a mental illness worse than others. Some people get a few different types of mental illness at the same time.

Sometimes people with a mental illness need medicine to help get the balance back in their nervous system.

Let’s look at some of the things that can happen to a person with a mental illness from having balance problems.
The person’s balance is no good like a river system with dams or bad chemicals.
One type of mental illness is called ‘psychosis’.

This person might see things that other people can’t see. Sometimes these things scare them.

They might hear things that other people can’t hear, like somebody talking to them.

Sometimes the voices tell them to do bad things.

They can’t think clearly.

They might have mixed up thoughts or silly thinking.

Some people with balance problems can act really strange sometimes.

They can become angry for no good reason, and might get violent and try to hurt their friends or family.
PART 3. MENTAL ILLNESS

Psychosis

Seeing things
Hearing voices
Mixed up thoughts
Silly thinking
Another type of mental illness is called ‘depression.’

This person may feel sad all the time for no reason.

They might cry a lot.

They may feel lazy all the time, and not want to go out of the house.

They might be sitting alone all the time and not want to talk to other people.

Sometimes people feel so bad, they feel like hurting themselves.

They might think about dying all the time, or talk about dying all the time.

This person might want to kill themselves. It is called suicide when someone does kill themselves.

People can get depression because there is not enough of a chemical called serotonin in the brain. Some people need medicine to help them get enough serotonin.

People who are depressed can also be psychotic (see Slide 12).
Sad all the time
No energy, sitting alone
Crying a lot
A person with a mental illness might have times when they have too much energy and not need to sleep.

This is called ‘mania’ and can be the ‘high’ phase of ‘bipolar’ illness.

**Bipolar** means that the person’s mood can swing from high to low and back again.

When a person has mania or a high mood, they might walk and talk and think very fast.

Low mood is the same as **depression** (see Slide 13).

People who are depressed or manic can also be **psychotic** (see Slide 12).
Mania

Too much energy, racing around
High mood, not much sleep
One type of mental illness can happen when a person has too many worries that don’t go away.

They may not be big worries but the person makes them big worries.

This person may talk really fast or talk a lot.

The person might feel restless and nervous.

They might also feel sweaty, shaky and feel their heart beating fast.

This is called ‘anxiety’.

People can have anxiety because too much of a chemical called adrenaline is in the brain and body.

Some people need medicine to help get the right balance of adrenaline.
PART 3. MENTAL ILLNESS

Anxiety
(Big Worries)

Nervous, shaky
Always worry
A person with a mental illness may also have **eating problems**.

They might eat too much bad food and get fat.

Or they might not eat and get too skinny.

A person with a mental illness may also have **sleeping problems**.

They may sleep too much, or not sleep enough or not sleep very well.
Eating problems

- Eat too much
- ...or don't eat enough
- Getting fat
- Or too skinny
Some people with a mental illness think that everybody is against them.

They might think other people don’t like them or are trying to hurt them.

This is called ‘paranoia’.

Sometimes people get more paranoid when they smoke gunja (marijuana, cannabis).
Think other people are against them
If some of these things are happening to you or someone you know, it means that there are balance problems in the nervous system.

The person may have a mental illness.

You can help.
If any of these things are happening to you or someone you know, how can you help?
A person with a mental illness needs to get the balance back. They need to get the chemicals in their brain balanced again.

There are many ways to do this, some of them are:

- Love and support from the family
- Sport
- Ceremony
- Aboriginal healer
- Aboriginal Mental Health Worker
- Mental Health Team
- Health centre
- Medicine
- Use less drugs and alcohol, or use none
- Music
- Dancing
- Culture
- Country
- Work
- Good food
- Good sleep

Some people can get the balance back soon but for some people it will take longer and they might always have some problems.

A person with a more serious mental illness that doesn’t go away easily, can have less problems if they use these ways of helping to get the balance back.

Some people with too much or not enough chemicals in their brain need medicine to help get the balance back.

It is important to look for signs of balance problems in yourself, your family and friends.

Then get help to balance the brain and body again.
Get the balance back

- Family help
- Stop drugs and alcohol
- MH team/health workers
- Ceremony
- Medicine
- Counsellor
- Healer
- Music
- Dancing
- Culture
- Country
- Work
- Good food
- Good sleep
- Exercise

Look for balance problems in yourself, your family and friends

GET HELP