

**The Hand Brain (story)**  
by Katrina, May 2019

One week, at school Katrina's art teacher Ms. Johnson decided that Katrina and her friend Jordan should make their own mugs. Katrina and Jordan glazed mugs before when they started their first school year at the Washington State School For The Blind. Now Ms. Johnson decided they should glaze their own mugs. For this art project, Katrina and Jordan are going to design animal design on their mugs. These animal designs are animals from the local zoo. Animals like reptiles, insects, birds, or any animal that you can design on a mug. Katrina and Jordan got some sheets of paper and a basket of markers. They started drawing animal details for their mugs. Jordan drew a giraffe, a bear, and a fish for his three mugs. Katrina drew three mugs with a butterfly, a tiger, and a fish. But her designs didn't turn out great. Ms. Johnson suggested that Katrina should draw a frog for her mug. But Katrina doesn't want to draw a frog for her mug.

"I'm no good with designs Ms. Johnson. Maybe I can't make my own mug." Katrina told her art teacher.

"That's all right Katrina, you can go take a break and draw new details." Ms. Johnson suggested. But Katrina was getting stress about her drawings and designs. Sometimes when Katrina gets stress, she cries and over(re)acts with someone else. When Katrina can't finish her school work like math, she over(re)acts. When she talks over other classmates, she's being disrespectful and rude like in science class. When one of her friends invites her to a big event like the WSSB Track Meet, Katrina decides not to participate in the events or the activities. When doing ILS in Hall Cottage, she throws plastic gloves at her cottage parents Mathew and Tarshine when cooking meatballs with cheese sticks. Or when she writes our stories on her BrailleNote Touch, Ms. Hagood suggested adding new ideas or props to her stories. Katrina's going to need some help with her stress for all these reasons.

"Kermit, I had a very stressing day at WSSB." she came home with great frustration.

"Oh dear Katrina, what kind of stress did you have?" I asked calmly.

"My zoo animal designs didn't have any details for my clay mug in art. I was not paying attention to my math work because I was talking. I was disrespectful and rude to my classmates in science. My friends invited me to the WSSB Track Meet and I don't want to participate in it. I threw plastic gloves to Mathew and Tarshine in Hall Cottage. And my speech teacher Ms. Hagood suggested adding new ideas and props for our stories on my BrailleNote Touch. These reasons get me overwhelmed and make me cry or over(re)act." Katrina burst into tears.

"Ah Katrina, I understand you're stressed, but that doesn't mean quitting your school work or throwing tantrums to others. You know something Katrina, I used get stressed when I was your age." I patted my best friend on the shoulder.

"You did Kermit, what did you do when you're stressed?" Katrina wiped her tears off with a tissue.

"I do a scientific hand motion to help calm myself down. I call it the Hand Brain." I explained.

"The Hand Brain? How do you do it Kermit?" asked Katrina.

"I'll show (you) Katrina, now, give me your hands." I took my best friend's hands and showed her the Hand Brain. First, you tuck in your amygdala; that's your thumb. Next, you cover your amygdala with your cortex. This is where your fingers are your thoughts that protect your feelings. Then, I taught Katrina the hand motion and the rhyme:

"Every now and then, I flip my lid, I didn't mean to, but I just did. But it's okay, I can tuck my feelings in, after all, flipping my lid's no sin."

You have to close your amygdala with your cortex. Then you have to open your cortex and widen your amygdala. Then you close up your hands again just like you're making fists. Katrina and I tried the Hand Brain and it worked perfect.

"You were right Kermit, the Hand Brain did help. I think I'm going to use it when I'm stressed at school. Thank you Kermit, oh, by the way, will you come with me to all my classes in school? I need you just in case I get a little stressed." asked Katrina.

"Not at all Katrina, I'll be by your side just in case." I said and went to WSSB with my best friend. The next day, Katrina tried again with her zoo animal designs in art. She drew an elephant and the word color blue. She drew a hippopotamus and the word color yellow. And she drew a tiger and the word color orange. Ms. Johnson was impressed with Katrina's animal designs.

"Excellent Katrina, I'm sure your mugs will be designed and glazed in no time." She put Katrina's three details on her desk.

Next comes math with Emily Owens, and Katrina got back studying math. She read the math problems quietly and used her classroom voice.

"Excellent work Katrina, your math is getting better." Katrina's teacher Emily thanked Katrina.

In science, Katrina was respectful and polite and let her classmates answer her teacher Mr. Paul Baldwin. Katrina stayed calm by doing the Hand Brain that I taught her in science.

"Every now and then, I flip my lid, I didn't mean it, but I did. But it's okay, I can tuck my feelings in, after all, flipping my lid's no sin."

"Great job Katrina for keeping your feelings to yourself." Katrina's teacher Mr. Baldwin complimented her.

That night in Hall Cottage, Mathew and Tarshine wanted Katrina to cook meatballs with cheese sticks. Matt was thinking Katrina should wear plastic gloves to put the meatballs in the oven.

"No Matt, I don't want to wear these gloves, those are like dentist gloves. You see, every now and then, I flip my lid, I didn't mean to, but I just did. But it's okay, I can tuck my feelings in, after all, flipping my lid's no sin." Katrina showed Matt the Hand Brain.

"Thanks for telling me your feelings Katrina. And I'm really sorry, I'll give you oven mitts instead." Matt gave oven mitts for Katrina. Katrina put on the mitts and slid the tray of meatballs slowly in the oven. When it was time for dinner, all the girls had their meatballs and cheese sticks. They all like the dinner Katrina made in ILS. The next day, Katrina went to her second period class: speech therapy. When her speech therapist Ms. Hagood suggested some ideas and props, she showed her the Hand Brain that I taught her the other day.

"Kermit taught me the Hand Brain whenever I get stressed or when I don't like someone's idea. The amygdala is the thumb, this is your feelings. And the cortex is your fingers, this is your thoughts that protects your feelings. Now here's how it goes Ms. Hagood. Every now and then, I flip my lid, I didn't mean to, but I just did. But it's okay, I can tuck my feelings in, after all, flipping my lid's no sin."

"Wow Katrina, you've done a great job doing your Hand Brain. I'm very proud of you for keeping your feelings in." Ms. Hagood complimented my best friend.

"Thanks Hagood, I couldn't have done it without my social coach/spirit guide." Katrina smiled. That afternoon, she came home to Sesame Street and told me about how her day was.

"Oh Kermit, I did pretty well at school. I even did the Hand Brain and kept my feelings in. Thanks for teaching me how to do the Hand Brain. Now I know what to do next time if I get stressed."

"You're welcome Katrina, I'm very proud of you for trying the Hand Brain, and for trying your best at school." I put my flipper on Katrina's shoulder. Do you use the Hand Brain when you get stressed? Try using it today and keep your feelings inside.

This is Kermit the Frog saying: "Every now and then, I flip my lid, I didn't mean it, but I just did. But it's okay, I can tuck my feelings in, after all, flipping my lid's no sin."