**‘Flipping ones lid’**

A child in an anxious state becomes unable to access their PFC so reasoning and problem solving behaviours will not be seen. Instead we see the control from the Amygdala. Remember this is the ‘emotional brain’ responding to danger. This danger may be perceived or real.

When this happens, it has come to be called “flipping your lid.”

Some young people, where developmentally appropriate, may benefit from understanding this concept and using the ‘hand model’ to give them some knowledge of how and why they feel the way they do when something causes anxiety. Understanding what happens to the brain can also encourage them to be more open to trying strategies to reconnect the pre frontal cortex and therefore regulate themselves.

Position your hand like the first image, your fingers are the PFC and your thumb hidden inside is your amygdala.

Now open up your fingers like the second picture, this represents ‘flipping your lid’. When someone ‘flips their lid’ the Amygdala is in now charge.

A child can use this to show you, non-verbally, where they feel they are, with perhaps 1 or 2 fingers connected before they have all 4 down to show they feel more regulated like the PFC is back in control. This strategy is helpful for some children to understand as use as a strategy.

When a child is in this elevated state, using language may not be an effective tool to help them calm down and self-regulate. The PFC cannot be accessed. The Amygdala in survival mode.

This triggers a Fight, Flight or Freeze response. So reactions may not be big loud and angry (fight) but could be freezing, mutism, hiding, becoming withdrawn as a freeze response or fleeing to get away from the anxiety trigger instead. They are all responses to the amygdala being in control.

