

HOW TO BE A BRAIN EXECUTIVE

And Get Sensory Smart!

**A Workbook for Understanding
and Managing Sensory Patterns**

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A blackboard on a stand with a whiteboard overlay. The whiteboard has a curled bottom-right corner. The text is written in a handwritten style.

Dedication

This book is dedicated to all of the kids, families, caregivers, and clinicians who read it. I thought of you as I wrote every word.

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Introduction to
Being a Brain
Executive

Introduction to Being a Brain Executive

Sensory What???

Okay, I could be wrong here, but I feel like everyone is talking about sensory this and sensory that and sensory processing and sensory integration and sensory breaks and sensory exercises and *sensory whatever* and I feel like it has something to do with me, but here's the problem, I HAVE NO IDEA WHAT IT'S ALL ABOUT.

What? You too???

Oh, and "Hi!"



Welcome

Welcome to the Brain Executive program, where you can learn about how your brain works and how to help it work a little better. What does this have to do with sensory *whatevers*? Everything, because sensory processing (you'll learn more about exactly what that is later) happens in the brain. As a Brain Executive, you can actually learn to manage your brain to help it work better. Pretty awesome, right? And the best part is, helping your brain helps you to do things that you want and need to do, and to do them better—like school stuff, which is important and all, but also things like playing sports or gaming or hanging out with your friends.



Well, I didn't say *the ultimate gamer* ... but yeah, you can totally get better at doing whatever is important to you. If that's gaming, well, you do you.

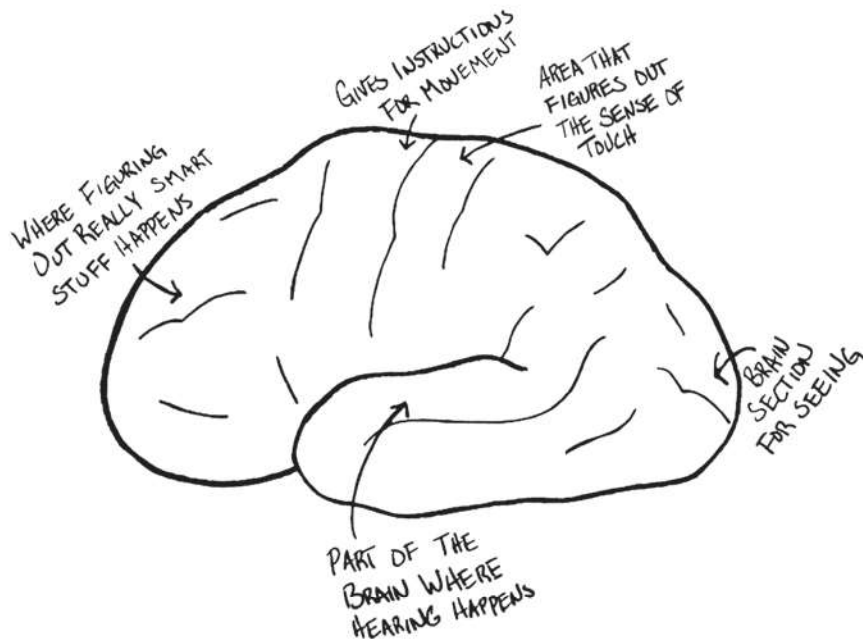
Ready to get started? Or at least want to learn a little more? Let's begin with some basics about the brain and being a Brain Executive.

Brain Executive – The Brain Part

I am guessing that you already know that you have a brain. But do you know what your brain actually does? Sure, it does the obvious stuff like thinking and learning, but that's just part of it. Your brain is basically the command center for your whole body and is responsible for things like how you think, feel, and act. In fact, almost everything you do involves your brain in some way. Want some examples? You got it.

For starters, your brain takes in a ton of information from the world around you and makes sense out of it. Did you know that you have a spot in your brain just for figuring out what you see? You also have a place in your brain just for your sense of touch—you know, so you can feel when somebody taps you on the shoulder or what it feels like to touch a snake (kinda *ewww*, but surprisingly not at all slimy). You even have areas that are specially designed for hearing and places in your brain where smelly feet are smelled. All of this has a lot to do with sensory *whatevers*.

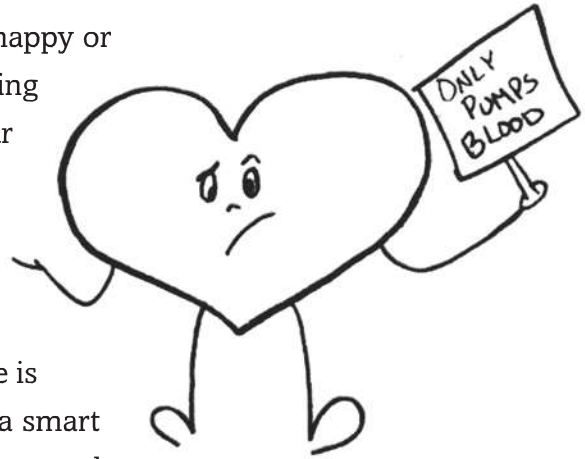
But that's not all your brain does. Your brain also tells your body how and when to move—raise your right hand, wiggle your big toe, nod your head, get up and run, now walk. All of that happens with commands from your brain.



Introduction to Being a Brain Executive

Also, I hate to break it to you, but feeling sad or happy or in love doesn't actually happen in your heart. That thing is just for pumping blood around and stuff. It's your *brain* that does all of that feelings stuff!

And don't forget the thinking and learning part, because your brain does that too, and it is one of the most complex things that it does. Our incredible ability to think like the smartie humans that we are is what sets us apart from other animals. For example, a smart dog knows how to sit, come when you whistle, lie down, and maybe roll over or play dead. A smart human can do stuff like build a rocket and go to the moon.



Workbook Section: Brain Exec Activity – The Brain

Did you know that your brain does so much? We don't think about it most of the time, but our brains are always working. Take a minute and think about all that your brain has been doing since you sat down to read. Can you write down some of what it has been doing below?

What have you seen, heard, smelled, tasted, or felt?

What body parts have moved?

Have you felt any emotions?

What have you learned?

Brain Executive – The Executive Part

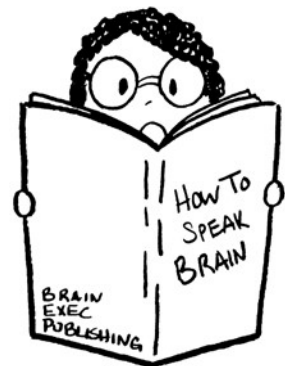
What's an executive? An executive is basically a boss. It's the person who tells everybody what to do (and then the people actually do it ... unlike when my older sister tries to tell me what to do and I just ignore her). You've heard of a CEO of a business, right? CEO stands for Chief Executive Officer. It's the person who is in charge and runs the whole company. The CEO is an expert about the company and manages it so that everyone is doing their best work and making the business the best that it can be. Without the CEO being in charge, everyone would be doing whatever they want and would probably do the wrong things at the wrong time or do too much or too little and in general just not work together well. So the whole executive thing is pretty important—they tell everyone what to do so that the whole company does its best work.

Brain Executive – Putting It Together

Now you might be thinking, *That's great, but I don't own a company.* True, BUT YOU DO OWN A BRAIN. Which means you can be a BEO, or a Brain Executive Officer—a person who is the boss of their brain so that it does its best work. Just like a CEO is in charge of a company, a BEO is in charge of a brain. Wait, *what?! I can tell my brain what to do?* Well, not exactly just tell it what to do, but you can definitely manage it so that it does more of the right things and less of the not-so-right things. It's like this: you can't just say "Brain, do this," or "Brain, do that" and boss it around all day. But you can learn to talk and listen to your brain in a way that helps it be its best. And helping our brains be their best is what we are going for here, Exec.

A Brain Exec is a person who is the boss of their brain!

Anyway, the brain sort of has its own language, and to be a good boss you have to know how to speak it. Think of it as learning "Brain Language," which is kind of like sign language because your brain understands things that you *do* more than when you just try to yell directions at it. Plus, it's not all about telling your brain what to do. To be a good boss, you also have to *listen*. Yeah, that's right; you have to listen to your brain and maybe even ask it a few questions like "Hey, how are you doing up there?" and "Do you need a little help?" When you learn how your brain is working, you can help it work better by changing some of the things that you do and when you do them.

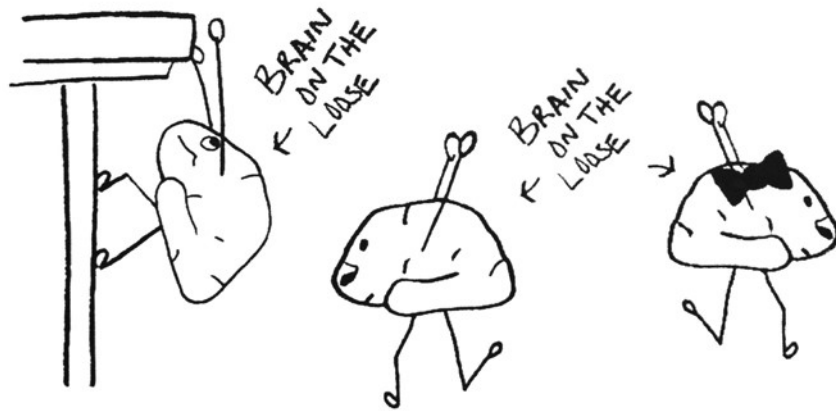


Introduction to Being a Brain Executive



Brain Fact: *You can communicate with your brain by the things that you do!*

People are usually surprised when they learn they can be the boss of their brain, but if your brain is so important and the command center for your whole body, shouldn't you be in charge of it? I mean, otherwise you are just letting it run around and do whatever it wants. Imagine a preschool class without a teacher. Agh! Brains on the loose! But this is your brain, which (don't forget!) controls pretty much everything you do. So, if it's wild chaos in there with no one in charge, well, it might make it hard to do some of the things that you need to do if your command center is chaos, Exec.



Okay, so maybe that's a little dramatic. But here is the thing: your brain does a bunch of stuff that you aren't even aware of—some of it good, some not so helpful. A big part of what we will learn to do is figure out exactly how your brain is working and help it work a little better. And where does the sensory *whatever* come in? Well, we have to figure out exactly what that stuff is and how it is working in your brain, how it is helping you out, and how we can help it out some too.

This is where being a Brain Executive comes in. Being the boss of your brain means understanding what is going on in there, managing it, and sometimes adjusting it. Pretty amazing, right? Now, back up for a sec and read that sentence again that starts “Being the boss of your brain means ...” See the middle part? The one that says you have to understand what is happening in your brain? That is what a lot of becoming a Brain Executive is going to be about: learning about your brain. I mean, an executive can't exactly run a company that they don't know anything about. What if the CEO of a pizza company didn't know what pizza should taste like? Or the CEO of a car company didn't know how to drive? Probably not the best choice for a boss. Well then, hello, if you are the **BEO** of your brain, you should probably know what's going on up there in your head!