

# Emotional vs. Rational Brain

**SUBMITTED BY:** Brian Page

**SUBJECT(S):** Personal Finance

**GRADE LEVEL(S):** 9, 10, 11, 12

## ≡ NBEA STANDARD(S):

- Personal Finance, I. Personal Decision Making
- Personal Finance, V. Buying Goods and Services

## ≡ RELATED ARTICLES:

- [“Startups, CEOs, VCs and More from the Movie ‘The Intern’”](#)
- [“Payday Loans and the Perils of Borrowing Fast Cash”](#)
- [“Olivia Mitchell on Why Young Consumers Should Just Say No to Spending”](#)
- [“Great Leaders Recognize and Value the Power of Emotions”](#)
- [“Beware of Scammers Lurking Online”](#)
- [“American Express Embraces Privilege and Purpose”](#)

JUMP\$TART NATIONAL STANDARD: Financial Decision Making, Standard 4

CEE NATIONAL STANDARD: Buying Goods and Services, Standard 5

COMMON CORE STATE STANDARD: CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.11-12.9

CONTENT STATEMENT: Students will experience how emotions unrelated to the decision at hand can trigger the “emotional brain” to make decisions that should be made by the “rational brain”.

ESTIMATED TIME: 50 minutes

MATERIALS NEEDED: [Emotional vs. Rational Brain Vocab Powerpoint](#) (included); [Managing Emotions Reflection Guide](#) (included); [Tricks to Emotional Intelligence Powerpoint](#) (included); [Weight Guess Guide](#) (included); Internet; Projector

KEY VOCABULARY/TERMS: Incidental emotions; Neuromodulators

WHY THIS MATTERS TO YOU NOW: As teenagers, you are consumers now. You need to learn that the emotion you experience from one event can influence a financial (or any other) decision you make on an unrelated event.

1. Divide the classroom in half.
2. Half the students briefly sit outside of the classroom, while the other half complete the Weight Guess Guide.
  1. Have students write down an estimate of what the young men pictured weigh on the Weight Estimate Guide.
  2. Students observe [this video](#) of a deaf woman hearing for the first time.
  3. Write on the board “previous participant guesses” and list guesses near their actual weights. (Actual weight is 235)
  4. Have students re-estimate the weight of the person in the picture, but this time they can use the estimates listed on the board from past participants.
3. Students inside the classroom switch places with students waiting outside of the classroom. The new students complete the Weight Guess Guide.
  1. Erase the estimates that you wrote on the board from the previous group.
  2. Have students write down an estimate of what the young men pictured weigh on the Weight Estimate Guide.
  3. Students observe [this video](#) of a family dog being put to rest.
  4. Write on the board “previous participant guesses” and list guesses near their actual weight. (Actual weight is 235)
  5. Have students re-estimate the weight of the person in the picture, but this time they can use the estimates listed on the board from past participants.
4. Bring all of the students together in your classroom and tabulate the results of the amount of students who changed their estimates to more closely match previous participant estimates:
  1. Students who changed their estimates who watched the Values.com – Live Life video:
  2. Students who changed their estimates who watched the PSA – Stop Bullying video:

5. **Hopefully** the results are similar to what Harvard Business School Professor Francesca Gino and her co-author Maurice Schweitzer of the Wharton School found, and that is our emotions can cloud our judgment. As it pertains to this replication of her experiment: participants exposed to the PSA – Stop Bullying video are less likely to re-estimate based on past participant estimates.
  1. Summary: Emotions—even simple ones like the irritation one feels in a traffic jam—make it difficult to analyze information properly.
6. Review the PowerPoint Tricks to Emotional Intelligence, providing students with evidence based suggestions to navigate incidental emotions that impact our ability to make rational choices.
7. Have students complete the Reflection, connecting lessons learned with considerations and strategies.

HOMEWORK / FURTHER EXPLORATION: Have students read or listen to the podcast [‘Feeling the Love’ \(or Anger\): How Emotions Can Distort the Way We Respond to Advice.](#)

This lesson might lead into a broader discussion on how emotional intelligence relates to strong leadership and success in the workplace. Consider using one or more of the linked WGYP articles at the top of this lesson for further discussion, conversation starters, related links and more.

OPTIONAL: Review the Vocabulary PowerPoint

Research with further ideas:

Lerner, Jennifer, Ye Li, Piercarlo Valdesolo, and Karim Kassam. N.d. MS. Harvard University.

*Annual Review of Psychology*. June 2014. Web. 26 July 2016. <

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