

Owls, Watchdogs, and Possums, *Oh my!*

An introduction to the model described in *Raising Kids with Big, Baffling Behaviors: Brain-Body-Sensory Strategies that Really Work* by Robyn Gobbel | robbygobbel.com/book



There are three different energy pathways in the brain.

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I call them the *Owl Brain*, the *Watchdog Brain*, and the *Possum Brain*.

OWL BRAIN

The wise Owl Brain is in charge when the brain and nervous system is feeling safe and open for connection.

The kind of behavior that you're hoping to see from your child- and yourself- comes from the Owl Brain.

When you are seeing big, baffling behaviors, you can be sure that the Owl has flown away.

You don't need to stop behavior. You need to bring back the Owl Brain.



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WATCHDOG BRAIN

When the nervous system detects possible danger, it flips into protection mode and the Watchdog Brain emerges.

Inspired by Dr. Perry's arousal continuum and his theory of State Dependent Functioning, there are four different Watchdog Brain responses: **What's Up? Ready for Action, Back Off!, and Attack.***

The watchdog is scared, but acts so scary that the Owl freaks out and flies away!

This is why logic isn't helpful and why previous consequences don't seem to matter.



POSSUM BRAIN

When the nervous system detects not just danger but potential life threat, it engages the Possum Brain.

Again, inspired by Dr. Perry's theory, there are four different Possum Brain responses: **La-La Land, Trickster, Shut Down, and Play Dead.***

The Watchdog pathway increases activation but the Possum pathway decreases it. As the Possum Brain gets more and more scared, it shuts down more and more.

**Each level of Watchdog and Possum activation will respond differently to different interventions.*



Felt-safety is the number one goal.