Australian Childhood Foundation

INTEROCEPTION

in the classroom



Acknowledgement of Country

We wish to acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land on which we are presenting on today, and pay our respects to all elders past, present and emerging.

Learning intentions

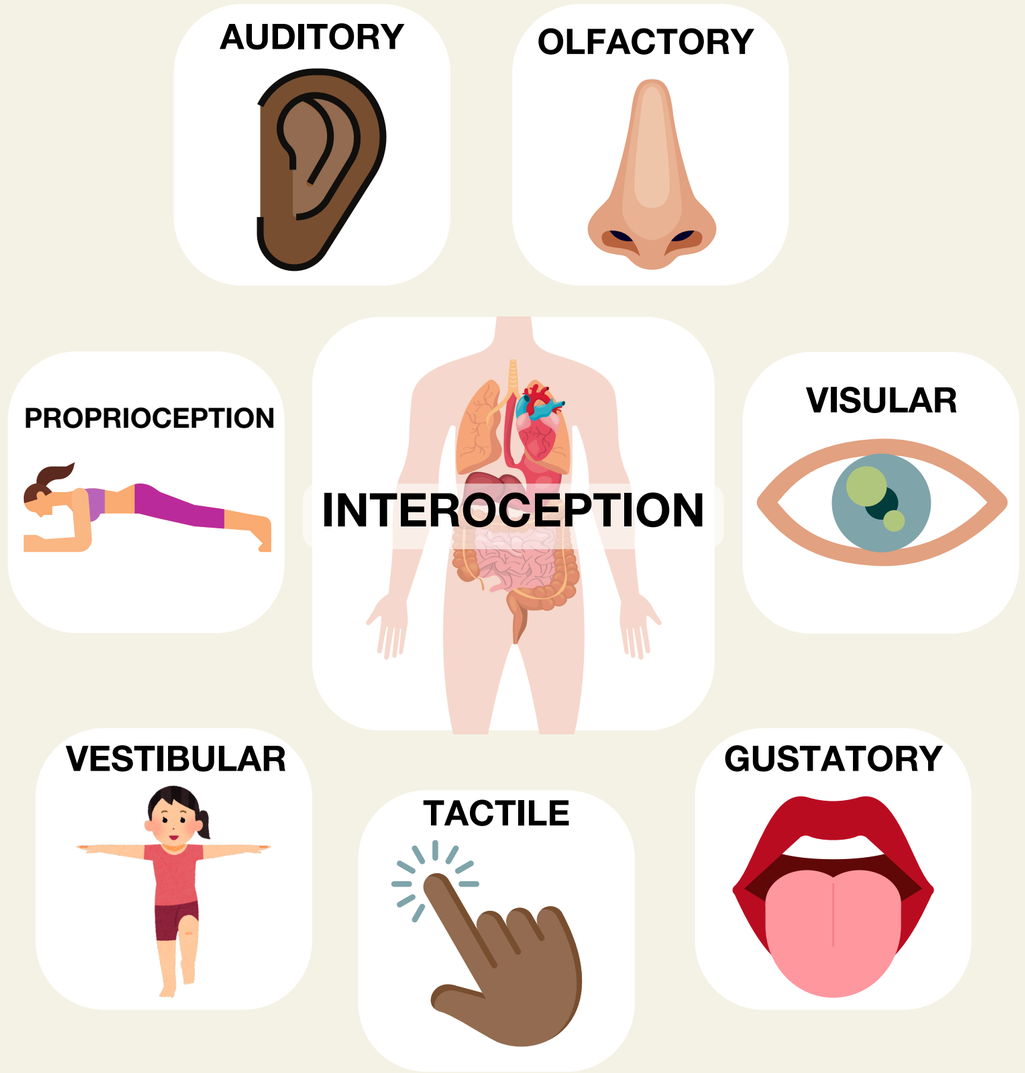
This resource is designed to help students understand interoception and learn techniques to develop their own interoceptive awareness.

Students will also learn the impacts that inaccurate interoceptive awareness can have on one’s ability to self-regulate their emotions.

What is Interoception?

Interoception can be described as 'sensing the inside' (Mahler, 2019). Unlike our external senses such as sight, smell, taste - which are reacting to outside triggers.

Interoception senses internal body signals such as your heart beating fast, stomach grumbling, or skin shivering (Mahler, 2019).





Have you ever had a “gut feeling” that something isn’t quite right?

Did you choose to listen, or ignore it?

Our “gut feeling” can be an example of interoception because it is our internal body sending a signal to make us feel an emotion (Holzer, 2017).

Interoception is the first sign that our body needs something to be fixed. Having accurate interoception awareness means we are able to recognise our body signals quicker, and act on them correctly to keep our body at equilibrium.



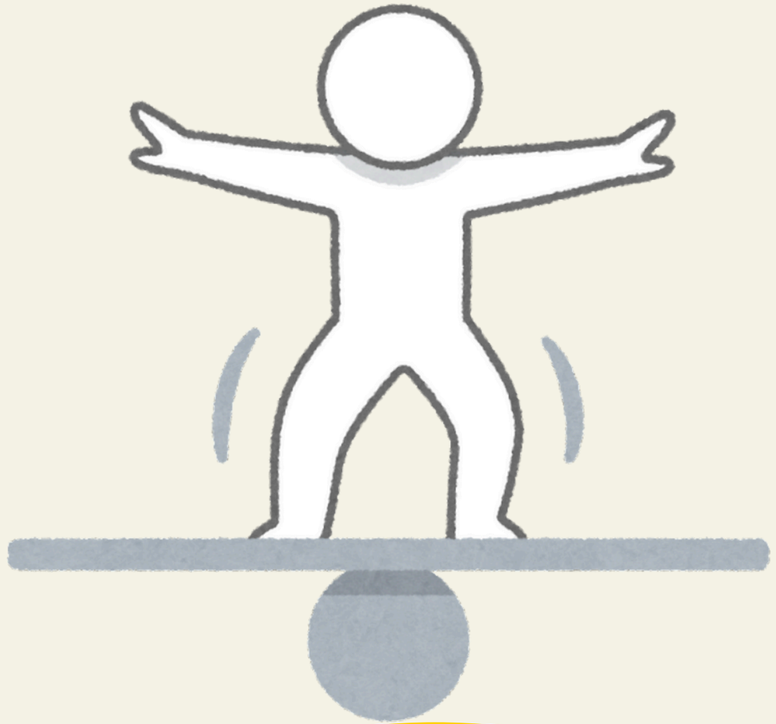


Interoception plays vital role in automatic bodily functions (Mahler, 2019). For example, when our bladder is full, it sends a signal to our brain to tell us to go to the toilet, we then act on that message to bring our body back to equilibrium (Mahler, 2019)

Importance of Equilibrium

Equilibrium is essentially a balancing act, where various elements work together in harmony to maintain ideal conditions (Neff, 2024).

When something disrupts equilibrium, adjustments are made to restore balance (Neff, 2024). For example, when we begin to overheat, our bodies will excrete sweat to keep the body in an ideal window of temperature (Neff, 2024).



Equilibrium and Interoception

Interoception plays a key role in detecting changes in the body’s internal environment and helping restore equilibrium when it's disrupted (Neff, 2024).

For example, our skin shivering might indicate that we are feeling cold, therefore we act by putting on a coat (Neff, 2024).

The body signal is shivering, and the interoceptive awareness is listening to the signal, and associating it with feeling cold.



Let’s brainstorm!

Imagine you are about to give speech to 500 people.
What are some body signals might you feel?



Interpreting Interoception

A person with accurate interoception awareness will be able to interpret body signals such as fast heart rate and nausea, as feeling nervous about their upcoming speech, and choose to engage in techniques to self-regulate back to a calm state (Price & Hooven, 2018).

Inaccurate Interoceptive Awareness

So what do we think will happen when someone can't interpret or recognise their body signals accurately?

The person may find it difficult to self-regulate their emotions, attention and behaviours.

Therefore, the intensity of the emotion continues escalating until it is often too large to control (Price & Hooven, 2018).

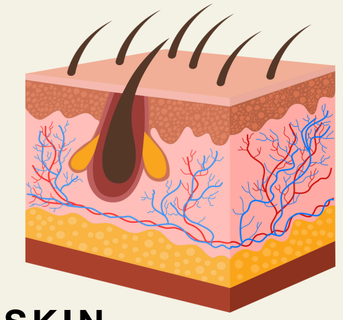


Your turn!

Time to stretch those legs. Choose one spot in the classroom for each body part shown.

Which body part do you associate with the below emotion? Go to that area in the classroom.

STRESSED



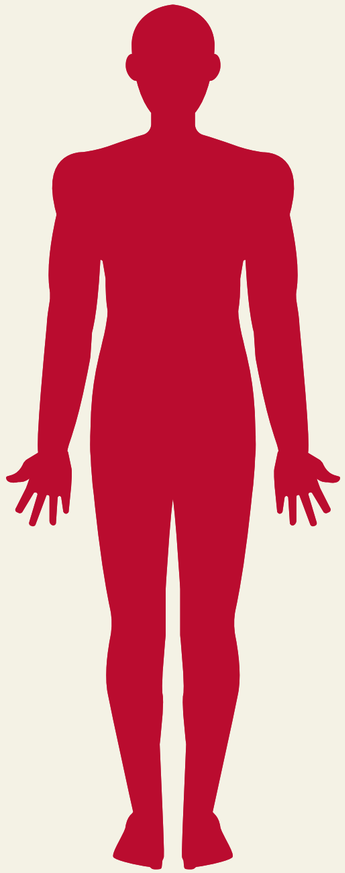
SKIN

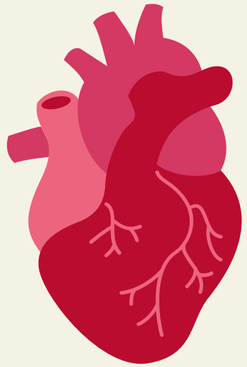


BRAIN

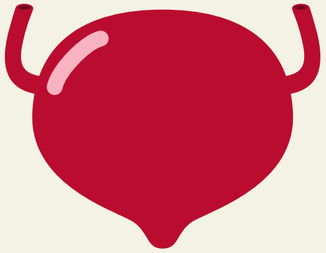


LUNGS





HEART



BLADDER



OTHER



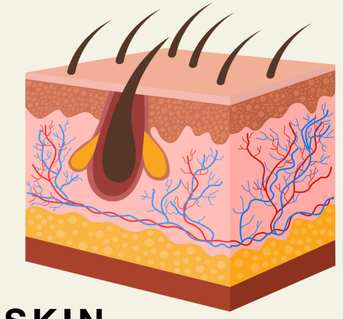
STOMACH

Your turn!

Time to stretch those legs. Choose one spot in the classroom for each body part shown.

Which body part do you associate with the below emotion? Go to that area in the classroom.

EXCITED



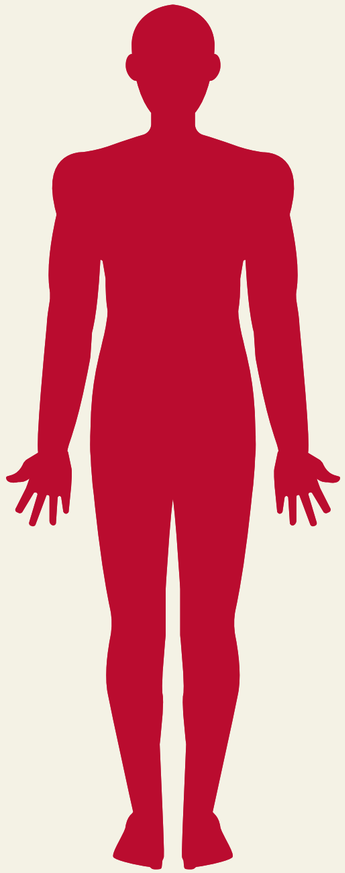
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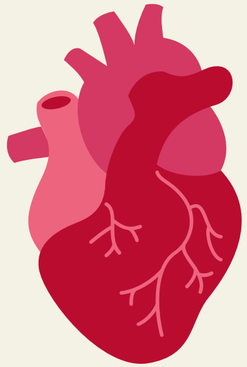


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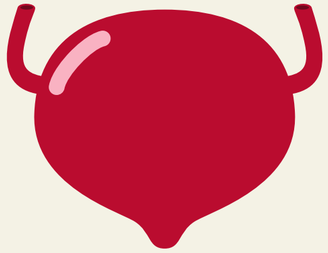


LUNGS





HEART



BLADDER



OTHER



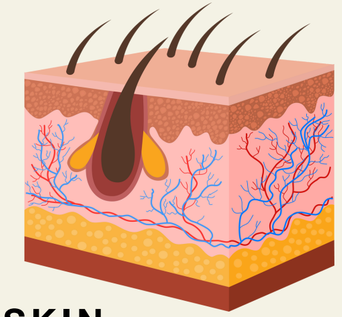
STOMACH

Your turn!

Time to stretch those legs. Choose one spot in the classroom for each body part shown.

Which body part do you associate with the below emotion? Go to that area in the classroom.

SCARED



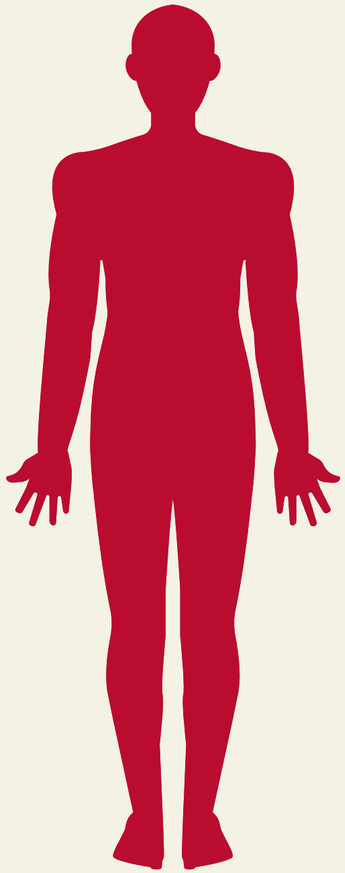
SKIN

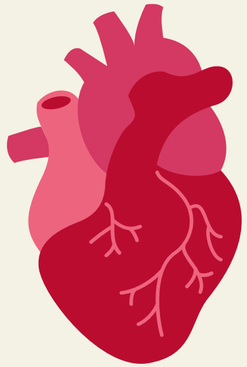


BRAIN

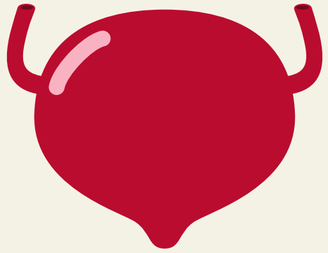


LUNGS





HEART



BLADDER



OTHER



STOMACH

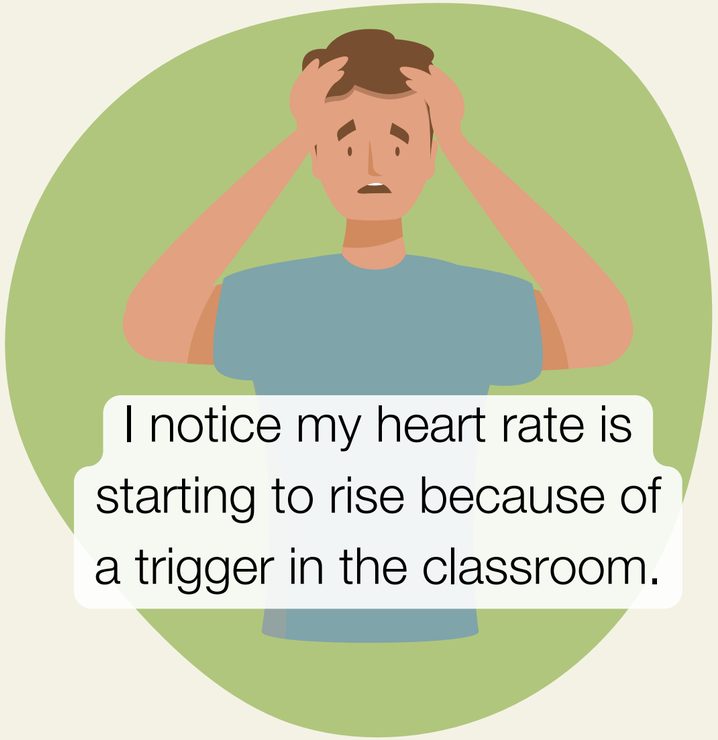
Quiz time!



Put your hands on your head if you think this image is showing accurate awareness.

Put your hands in your lap if you think this image is showing inaccurate awareness.

Quiz time!



I do not register this body signal, and choose to ignore it.



Put your hands on your head if you think this image is showing accurate awareness.

Put your hands in your lap if you think this image is showing inaccurate awareness.

Let’s discuss!

What could be done differently in this situation?



I notice my heart rate is starting to rise because of a trigger in the classroom.

I do not register this body signal, and choose to ignore it.



My frustration turns to anger and I start to lose control.

Example:



I notice my heart rate is starting to rise because of a trigger in the classroom.

I register this body signal as frustration, and talk to the teacher about what I'm feeling



The teacher helps me choose a self-regulating activity to bring my body back a calm state.

ACCURATE INTEROCEPTIVE AWARENESS



4 Ways to Practice Interoceptive Awareness

1. Body Scan
2. Deep Breathing
3. Mindful Life Activities
4. Sensory Tools & Activities

1 Body Scan

Start by laying down in a comfortable position and close your eyes.

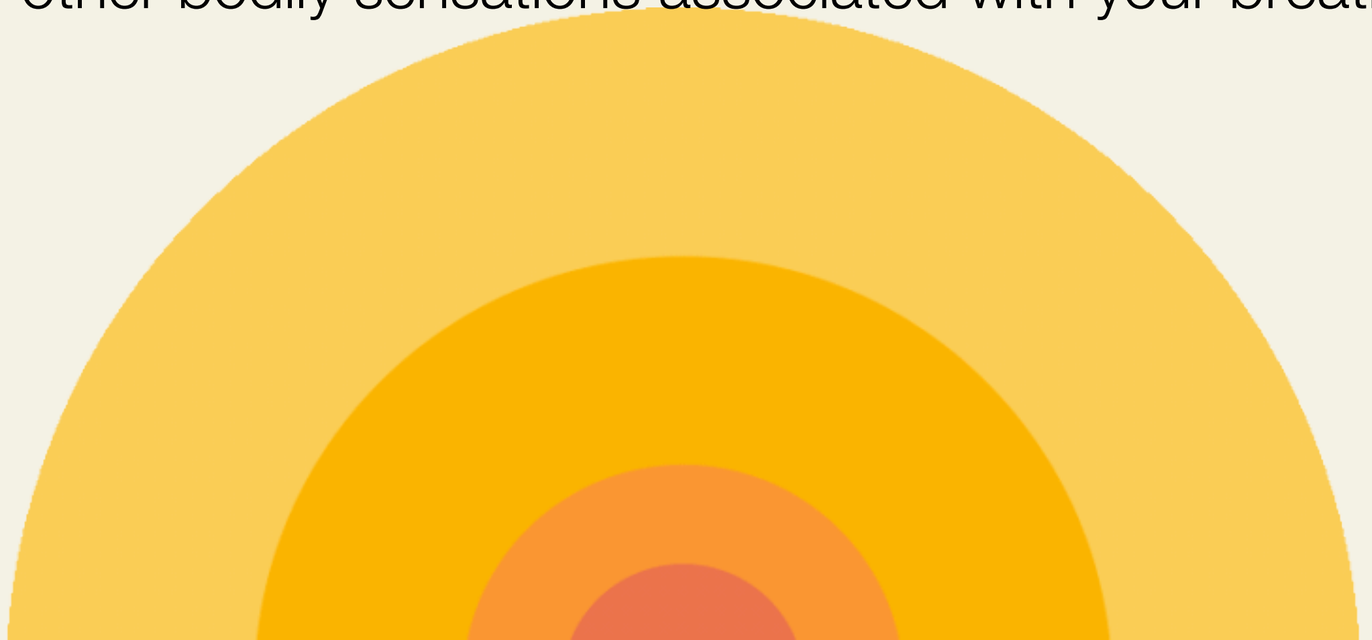
Direct your attention to your toes and pay attention to any sensations you feel. Slowly work your way up your head and become aware of different areas in the body and the sensations they carry, such as tension, warmth, or relaxation.



2 Deep Breathing

While sitting, place your hands on your stomach.
Close your eyes and take a deep breath, in and out.

Notice how the air feels as it enters and leaves your body. Pay attention to the rise and fall of your chest, the feeling of air passing through your nostrils, and any other bodily sensations associated with your breathing.



3 Mindful Life Activities

Take time to tune into your body sensations whilst you are doing daily life activities such as eating, brushing your teeth, or walking.



Mindful Eating
pay attention to the texture and flavours



Mindful Walking
pay attention to each breath and step



Mindful Brushing
pay attention to the sounds and texture against your teeth.

4 Sensory Tools & Activities

Chose a sensory tool or activity and tune-in to the sensations you feel. Does this make your breathing slow down or speed up? Does this tool make you feel more focused or distracted? Will this be a good tool to use in future to help calm your emotions ?

Fidget spinner, spiky rings, pop -its.



Stress ball, kinetic sand, slime.





Finger painting, drawing, origami.

Remember

Interoception is different for everyone

The body signals you get could be different to others. It is important to take time to listen to your body and understand what your signals are telling you and why.

The more accurate you get at interpreting your body signals, the better you will become at self-regulating your emotions.

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