

Making Neuroscience Fun

A Brain Awareness Program for All Ages



Brain Health: It's SPECTacular

Story General Information

Your Brain Wants You to Be Happy (🧠 An Emotional Health Story) (1st Grade- 6-7 yrs.)

This story introduces children to the reward pathway, the place in your brain that makes you feel happy.

- 🧠 The main job your brain has is to keep you alive.
- 🧠 When you do something that you need to do to stay alive, like eating food, you “feel” happy. This makes sure you do that behavior again.
- 🧠 Whenever you feel happy, your reward system is working, so listen to your brain...it wants you to be happy.

The facilitator begins by introducing themselves, neuroscience, and the program: Brain Health: It's SPECTacular. The facilitator breaks down the meaning of SPEC for the children and discusses how the letter E represents Emotional Health. Emotional Health is an important part of keeping the brain healthy and happy. In this story, the children learn more about keeping their brain healthy through understanding their emotions and how to handle them. The primary focus is on being happy and how the brain and body contribute to that emotion and process.

The children review with the facilitator the job of the brain. The brain functions to keep the body alive. The brain and body complete many behaviors together. When those behaviors are completed, the brain and body feel happy. The children are introduced to their brain's “*happy place*.” The happy place is actually called the *reward pathway* and allows someone to feel good and happy when they do something that the brain or body need to stay healthy.

The facilitator walks the children through a scenario, in which the brain and body need something, such as being hungry. Someone will eat when they are hungry and their *happy place* is turned on. The body remembers what it did to feel happy. Next time, it will take less thinking to complete the behavior. The *happy place* turns off once the brain and body are satisfied. Too much of something is not healthy for the body or brain either. Playing a video game can be relaxing and fun. It makes someone happy; however, playing for too long can hurt the brain and body. Just like too much food, water, or exercise can also hurt the body and brain.

Doing different behaviors and spending time doing different activities helps the brain and body stay healthy and happy. The brain's *happy place* is switched on and off by fulfilling the many needs (eating, drinking, spending time with family and friends, playing outside, singing, etc...) of the brain and body.

Overall, it is important to remember that the brain wants someone to feel happy. The body and brain work together to complete behaviors needed and turn on the *happy place*. This builds a happy and healthy brain, which is SPECTacular!

Story Objectives:

- Students will describe the main function of the brain is too keep someone/thing alive.
- Students will define *emotion*.

- Students will identify different behaviors the brain and body work together to do to stay alive.
- Students will define the *reward pathway (happy place)*.
- Students will describe the correlation between completing a behavior and the way your brain/body feels (turning on and off the *happy place*).
- Students will recognize that emotions cause us to make decisions (healthy or not).
- Students will discuss how too much of something can be unhealthy for our brains and bodies.