



## Your Brain Wants You to Be Happy (🧠 An Emotional Health Story) (1<sup>st</sup> 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.

### ♥SLIDE #1 - INTRODUCTION:

Good Morning (Afternoon)!

My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I (describe who you are and give your relation to neuroscience – ex. you are a Neuroscientist, you study neuroscience, you have a friend that is a neuroscientist or you have recently been learning a lot about neuroscience).

Neuroscience, that’s a really big word! But, a neuroscientist is a person who knows a lot about the brain.

I am here today to talk to you about how you can help to make your brain healthy – feeling good. It is REALLY easy and anyone can do it.

I love to talk about Brain Health because it’s SPECTacular!!! SPECTacular means “GREAT”. When your brain is SPECTacular, you are a happy and healthy person.

This story is about Emotional Health – which is the E in SPECTacular. Emotional Health helps your brain stay healthy when you understand about how you “feel” – your emotions.

There are lots of emotions. Being happy, sad, surprised, disgusted or mad. These are all emotions.

Understanding that we have emotions and how we control our emotions is very important to making our brain healthy.

When you understand your emotions and learn how to control your emotions, that makes your brain healthy.

So, let’s see how you can keep your brain healthy.

### ♥SLIDE #2– YOUR BRAIN WANTS YOU TO BE HAPPY

When you feel happy, it is usually because you are doing something that is good for keeping your brain and your body healthy.

In this story, we will see how that works.

### ♥SLIDE #3 – FEEL HAPPY

Being happy is an emotion – something that you can “feel” inside you.

You do not feel “happy” with your hands, you actually “feel” happy with your brain.

### ♥SLIDE #4 – BRAIN LETS YOU FEEL HAPPY

Your brain is built to let you feel happy. Why?

Let’s think about what your brain is supposed to do – basically everything. It helps you think, move, see, feel, etc.

Your brain puts all of those things together to help you to do behaviors that help you stay healthy – you sleep, move around, go school, eat, and drink – so your body can help you do all the things you need to do.

Because doing these things are so important, your brain wants you to do them. So, when you do something that is going to be good for your body and your brain your brain makes you feel happy.

### ♥SLIDE # 5 – HAPPY PLACE

There is a special place inside your brain – called the reward pathway, but we can call it your “happy place”.

Your “happy place” works to make sure you feel happy when you are doing behaviors that you need to do to stay healthy.

### ♥SLIDE #6 – BRAIN TALKS TO YOUR BODY

Your happy place only makes you feel happy when your brain makes your body do behaviors that you need to do to stay healthy. So...your brain “talks” to your body.

So, let’s say that you are hungry, and you have to eat.

Your brain knows what you have to do to get food, so your brain tells your body to get food.

Your brain also knows that you have to put the food in your mouth, and you need to chew and swallow it.

Your brain is so cool, because your brain knows that if you eat an apple – then your mouth has to chew a lot before you swallow. Your brain also knows that if you eat applesauce – then your mouth does not have to chew a lot before swallowing.

### ♥SLIDE #7 – YOU FEEL HAPPY

Once your body gets the food that it needs, then your brain turns on your “happy place” and you feel happy.

You feel happy because your “happy place” is turned on – just like a light is turned on with a light switch.

Your happy place is turned on because your brain needed food and you ate food – so your brain got what it needed and you got happy.

### ♥SLIDE #8 – BRAIN AND BODY WORK TOGETHER

Now, the next time that you feel hungry, you will remember what your body did to get food and eat the food.

Remembering how to get and eat food will let your brain and body do this behavior again without having to think too much about it. Not having to do a lot of thinking makes it easy on your brain and body.

Plus, you will remember how happy you felt after you ate when you were hungry. You will get the food and eat the food and then your brain will turn on your “happy place”. YAY!!! It is fun to be happy.

#### ♥SLIDE #9 – BRAIN TURNS HAPPY PLACE OFF

Feeling happy makes us feel good about things. We like to be happy – but, our brain knows that you cannot be happy all the time.

Your brain can turn on your “happy place” when you do behaviors that help your body and your brain stay healthy.

AND, your brain is able to shut off the “happy place” after you get what your body needs.

#### ♥SLIDE #10 – BRAIN KNOWS WHAT YOU NEED

Feeling happy for doing something that your brain knows your body needs to do is important. But, your brain has to make your body do lots of things – like going to school, sleeping and drinking water.

Your brain does not want your body to eat all the time. Your brain only wants you to eat when you are hungry.

That is why your brain turns off the “happy place” when you are no longer hungry. Eating food will only make us happy if we eat it when we are hungry.

#### ♥SLIDE #11– EMOTIONS

Plus, your brain knows that it is ok to feel other emotions too.

Different emotions are needed to help you do other things – like being afraid helps you be more careful about doing things.

#### ♥SLIDE #12– SCARY CAN BE GOOD

Let’s say you need to cross the street to get back home after you get off the school bus.

You know that cars on the street can smush you and that would not be much fun.

Not only would getting smushed not be much fun – but, it makes having to cross the street a little bit scary.

Being a little scared of crossing the street is a good thing. That means you will be careful about crossing the street. Your brain will remember, all the rules for crossing the street so that you do not get smushed by a car.

#### ♥SLIDE #13 – TOO MUCH IS NOT GOOD

In fact, if you do something that makes you feel happy too much – your brain really does not like that either.

Let’s see what we mean....

Suppose you are playing a video game – like on a tablet or computer or phone.

You have not played the video game for a long time and playing the video game makes you feel happy.

Hmmm...even though playing a video game does not fill you up when you are hungry and playing the video game does not let you sleep when you are tired and playing the video game does not make you less thirsty when you need a drink of water – playing the video game does make you feel happy.

There are lots of reasons why playing a video game may make you happy...it can relieve stress, you can do it with your friends – so that is good for your social health, lots of reasons.

#### ♥SLIDE #14 – BRAIN TURNS OFF YOUR HAPPY PLACE

But, playing the video game only makes you feel happy when you first start playing it.

You start playing the game and you are happy...the happy place in your brain gets turned on just like a lightbulb.

BUT, remember, your “happy place” does not stay on all the time. Once you feel happy, then the “happy place” gets turned off.

But, you still play a video game...why???

#### ♥SLIDE #15 – WHY PLAY?

This is a good question. Most likely it is because other emotions that you are feeling.

You may just have been beaten by a monster in the game and that makes you mad because you want to win.

You may know that your friend is farther along in the game and you want to catch up to them.

You may be bored and you do not know what else to do – so you figure why not play the video game.

But, we all know that doing too much of anything is not good.

#### ♥SLIDE #16 – TOO MUCH OF A GOOD THING

The problem with playing the video game even though it is not making your brain happy anymore, is that somehow playing video games too much can actually hurt your body and your brain.

Wait, how can playing a video game hurt my brain?

It is not the playing of the video game that is the problem – it is how long you play the video game.

Too much of a good thing can be bad. If you started playing to relieve stress, then playing for a long period of time can make you even more stressed.

#### ♥SLIDE #17 – TOO MUCH OF ANYTHING

It turns out that “too much” of anything can be bad for your body and your brain.

Eating too much food, drinking too much water, exercising too much, sleeping too much – these are all things that can hurt your body and your brain.

If you are doing too much of one thing, then you will not be doing the other things that you need to do to help your body and your brain stay healthy.

### ♥SLIDE #18 – MODERATION

You may think that playing the video game all day will make you happy, but it really won't. We know this because your brain's "happy place" does not work that way.

When you need something, then brain makes your body get what it needs, it turns on your "happy place" so you feel happy when you get what you need and then your brain turns off your "happy place".

Playing video games for a short time, can make you happy – so maybe set a timer, or use a stopwatch, or tell someone to stop you after a short time.

You needed something about the video game and once you get it – then it really is not making you happy anymore.

So, play for a little bit and then go on to do something else.

### ♥SLIDE #19 – HELPS OTHERS TOO

This will make others happy too, because you will be available to do other things.

**QUESTION:** What are some of the things that you like to do with other people or that you like to do to help other people?

That's right, making puzzles, playing with blocks or other toys with other people will make you and them happy.

Plus, did you know that making someone else happy – by being with them and playing with them - will get their "happy place" to turn on and in doing so, will also turn on your brain's "happy place"???

Just being with other people and helping other people will turn on both of your "happy places".

### ♥SLIDE #20– BRAIN WANTS YOU TO BE HAPPY

So, you need to remember that your brain wants you to be happy.

When you are happy it is usually because you are doing a behavior that you need to be doing to help your brain and your body stay healthy.

Your brain will reward you by turning on the "happy place".

Your brain does this to be sure that you do the behaviors – like eating, drinking, sleeping, AND relieving stress – by playing video games for a short time and then by playing with other people.

These behaviors help your body and your brain stay healthy.

### ♥SLIDE # – CONCLUSION

Thank you all for letting me talk to you about your brain's "happy place".

I have enjoyed spending time with you today talking about the brain. I hope that you have had some fun and learned something about your brain.

REMEMBER, your brain makes you happy so you will do the behaviors you need to do. You need to do certain behaviors to stay healthy and helping your brain stay healthy is SPECTacular.

**THANK YOU SO MUCH FOR ALL OF YOUR HELP!!! Brain Health is not just SPECTacular...it is FUN!!!**