



A SPECTacular Trip to the Zoo (🌈 A Brain Health Story) (2nd Grade – 7-8 yrs)

In this story, the children set out on a **SPECT**acular adventure to explore the “Brain Zoo.” By comparing the four major components of a healthy brain (Social, Physical, Emotional, & Cognitive) to exhibits in a zoo, they will develop a deeper understanding of their brains’ functions.

- 🌈 The different functions of your brain allow you to carry out your daily lives.
- 🌈 Each SPEC component contributes equally to your overall brain health and a decrease in one area can affect your overall brain health.
- 🌈 Each person (and animal) has a unique brain and can utilize the SPEC components in different ways to maintain a healthy brain.

🌈 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.

To spell SPECTacular you need...S – P – E – and C.

To keep your brain healthy, you also need S – P – E – and C.

The 1st thing that helps your brain stay healthy is loving yourself and loving other people-that is being **Social**. That is the **S**.

“Being social” means you love yourself and you are nice to yourself.

It also means that you like and are nice to other people.

The 2nd thing that helps your brain stay healthy is taking care of your body – that is being **Physical**. That is the **P**.

Being physical means you move your body, you eat to get energy, and you sleep to rest.

The 3rd thing that helps your brain stay healthy is knowing how and why you “feel” – **Emotions**. That is the **E**.

There are lots of emotions. Being happy, sad, surprised, disgusted or mad. These are all emotions that we can feel and experience.

Knowing that we have different emotions and that we can control them is very important to making our brain healthy.

The 4th thing you can do to make your brain healthy is to think...and not just when you are in school. **Cognition** - that is the **C** – is a big word that means being able to think.

Inside your head, your brain thinks all the time!!!

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

SLIDE #2 – A SPECTACULAR TRIP TO THE ZOO

In this story, we are going to see how our brains are kind of like a zoo.

A zoo is made up of different parts, and so is your brain.

In the different parts of a zoo there are different kinds of animals that do different things.

The different parts of your brain do different things too.

So, let's take a trip and see how your brain is like a zoo.

SLIDE #3 – ANIMALS AT THE ZOO

QUESTION: Have you ever been to the zoo? What types of animals can we see at the zoo?

In a zoo, there are LOTS of animals.

There are kangaroos, exotic birds, elephants, cheetahs, giraffes, monkeys, gorillas, polar bears and penguins.

Each of these animals behave very differently and live in very different habitats, but when they're all together they make up a zoo.

SLIDE #4 – YOUR BRAIN DOES LOTS OF THINGS

Now, let's think about our brain.

QUESTION: What are some things you think your brain helps you do?

Our brains help us talk to each other and make new friends, our brains help us move our bodies in lots of ways, our brains help us feel happy and feel sad and lots of other emotions, and our brains help us think and solve puzzles.

With all of these different jobs, your brain needs to have different parts to be able to do all these things. This is one of the ways that our brains are like a zoo.

So, today we're not just taking a trip to any zoo, we're taking a trip to the Brain Zoo.

The Brain Zoo has many different exhibits, but today we're going to visit just four of them.

At each stop during our trip through the Brain Zoo, we're going to learn about a part of our brain that helps us do awesome things like make new friends, move our bodies, feel happy and even solve puzzles.

And we'll make sure to see some cool animals along the way!

So ... who's ready to go to the Brain Zoo?!?!

SLIDE #5 – FRIENDSHIP RAINFOREST

Ok...the first stop at the Brain Zoo is the Friendship Rainforest.

The Friendship Rainforest is in the **social** part of our brain.

Here in the Friendship Rainforest, we're going to learn all about how important it is to make new friends that support and help you.

QUESTION: What you like to do with your friends to have fun?

Ok.. you can play together at recess, have play dates, play sports, eat lunch together. Those things all sound like so much fun.

You can do a lot of things with your friends like talk to them, dance with them, and even exercise with them.

SLIDE #6 – BEING SUPPORTED MAKES US CONFIDENT

Having good friends can help us feel like we are not alone, and our friends make us feel supported.

When we have friends that support us and accept us for who we are, that makes us feel good about ourselves and it makes us feel more confident.

Importantly, self-confidence makes our brains healthy, happy and unique.

SLIDE #7 – SOCIAL ANIMALS

QUESTION: What type of animals do you think belong in the Friendship Rainforest?

You're right! There are a lot of different types of animals that are very social and are good at making friends.

Probably the most social animal at the zoo is one of these – birds.

Look at all of the different kinds of birds you can find in the Friendship Rainforest.

QUESTION: Who can tell me how birds communicate with each other?

Exactly! Birds use different songs and calls to identify and talk to each other.

Because we can always hear birds singing and chirping, we know that birds are very social and love to make friends. That is why they fit in so well in the Friendship Rainforest.

SLIDE #8 – FRIENDSHIP

The Friendship Rainforest is extremely important and so is your Social Health.

Having friends that are supportive and make you feel confident will prevent you from feeling alone if you are feeling sad or down.

Friends help you create a social support system that will help you through hard times.

For that reason, friendships help our brains stay healthy!

SLIDE #9 – MOVEMENT SAFARI

Now that we've learned about our social brain, it's time to move onto the next stop in our trip around the Brain Zoo.

Our next stop is ... the Movement Safari.

The Movement Safari is in the **physical** part of our brain.

Everything in the Movement Safari is about how we move our bodies and how that strengthens our brain.

QUESTION: What do you do to move your body?

That is right, dancing, playing sports, going for walks, going to gym class, and playing tag at recess are all great ways to move your body.

Sports, dancing or gym classes are great ways to get some physical exercise, but even just going for a walk or bike ride are both great ways to move your body.

SLIDE #10 – CHEMICALS

Even though when you exercise you are building your muscles, physical activity also strengthens your brain.

When you move your body, your brain releases special chemicals (endorphins) that make your brain stronger.

We need our brains to be strong so that if we get stuck in difficult situations, our brain will help us be smart and successful.

SLIDE #11 – CHEETAH

I wonder what animals we will see on our visit to the Movement Safari.

QUESTION: Can you think of any animals that are very strong or very fast? What about this animal, does anyone know the name of these speedy animal?

That's right – this is a cheetah.

Cheetahs can run as fast as 80 miles per hour. That's about as fast as cars drive on the highway!

While none of us can run quite as fast as a cheetah, we can take after the cheetah's behavior and make sure to move our bodies.

SLIDE #12 – MOVEMENT

The Movement Safari is an important part of the Brain Zoo because moving our bodies will help our brains be strong and healthy.

Being physically active and making sure to move our bodies at least 30 minutes every single day will not only let us grow big, strong muscles, but we will also have strong brains.

We will have stronger brains because the physical part of our brain will be working.

The Movement Safari also reminds us that to have the energy to move, you also need to eat and get some sleep.

Moving, eating and sleeping are all very important parts of your Physical Health.

SLIDE #13 – MOODY ARTIC

Now we're on to the next stop in our trip around the Brain Zoo...the Moody Arctic.

The Moody Arctic is in the emotional parts of our brain.

Here, we're going to talk about all of the different moods we have and all of our feelings and emotions.

Some emotions that we feel are happiness, sadness, fear, disgust, anger, and surprise.

QUESTION: When someone is in a good mood, what emotion is that person feeling?

Ok...when someone is in a good mood – they are usually feeling happy.

QUESTION: If someone is in a bad mood, what emotions do you think they could be feeling?

Ok...when someone is in a bad mood they could be feeling anger, or sadness or even fear.

There are lots of different emotions that we can feel and the emotions that we are feeling can affect the mood that we are in – which will affect how we behave.

SLIDE #14 – POLAR BEARS AND PENQUINS

Here are some animals that we might find in the Moody Arctic.

Polar bears and penguins live in the arctic where it is very cold.

Polar bears may seem very cuddly and warm, but they can also get very angry when other animals try to mess with them.

Penguins often spend long periods of time apart from their families, but when they return, they like to hug each other to show their feelings.

Both penguins and polar bears know how to show their emotions and we would definitely expect to find them in the Moody Arctic.

SLIDE #15 – EXPERIENCES AFFECT EMOTION

It is important to remember that we are all different and one thing that makes you happy may make someone else afraid.

Let's take the polar bear as an example.

Some people might see the polar bear and think they are cute and cuddly. They make think this because they have never seen an angry polar bear.

Other people may be very afraid of polar bears because they have only seen angry polar bears.

It is ok for people to have different emotions – as long as you understand it is because we all are unique and have different experiences.

SLIDE #16 – IDENTIFY WHAT YOU FEEL AND WHY

Since we all have unique emotions, it is important to think about how certain things make you feel.

It is perfectly fine to feel all different kinds of emotions.

It is hard to be completely happy every second of the day and it is healthy to feel other emotions.

Also remember that emotions can change your mood and how you behave.

When you are in a bad mood, it is important to identify what made us feel sad or angry.

You don't want to be sad or angry with a friend if they did not do anything to make you sad or angry. That would not be fair to them.

SLIDE #17 – IMPORTANT TO UNDERSTAND YOUR FEELINGS

Thinking about our feelings will not only help us understand our emotions, but it can help us understand other people's feelings better, too.

Being able to identify and understand our emotions will help make the emotional part of our brains healthy.

Visiting the Moody Arctic part of the Brain Zoo to understand our own feelings can help us build closer friendships and will allow us to have control over how we are feeling.

And, most importantly, understanding our feelings will be good for our Emotional Health.

SLIDE #18 – THINKING JUNGLE

We have made it to our final stop in our trip around the Brain Zoo. Our last stop is ... the Thinking Jungle.

Thinking is the way that our brains help us come up with ideas and learn new things.

The thinking part of our brain is called the cognitive part and when we are thinking and learning that is good for our Cognitive Health.

QUESTION: When do you use your thinking brain??

Whenever we learn to do something new like riding a bike or learning how to tie your shoes you are thinking.

When you are at school, doing puzzles, or reading you are thinking.

SLIDE #19 – THINKING AND LEARNING

We are thinking and learning all the time.

In fact, whenever we are awake, we are thinking and learning about the world around us.

Using our thinking brains allows us to try new things and be successful in brand new situations.

The coolest thing about the brain is that every time we learn something new and use our thinking skills, it changes our brain!

Since we're always thinking and learning, our brain is always changing! And, most importantly, a changing brain makes a healthy brain!

SLIDE #20 – MONKEYS, GORILLAS & ELEPHANTS

But we aren't the only ones that use our thinking brains.

QUESTION: What kind of animals might we see in the Thinking Jungle? Can you tell me what these animals are??

Monkeys, gorillas and elephants are very smart animals and definitely belong in the Thinking Jungle.

Just like us, monkeys and gorillas are able to use their thinking brains to solve puzzles and even speak in sign language.

Elephants have very strong memories. Using our memory also requires us to use our thinking brains, so we would certainly find elephants in the Thinking Jungle.

SLIDE #21 – THINKING JUNGLE

The Thinking Jungle is one of the most important parts of the Brain Zoo.

Without the Thinking Jungle, we would have a lot of trouble solving problems, remembering things, and learning about our environment.

Thinking about the world around us will help us all have healthy brains and good Cognitive Health.

SLIDE #22 – BRAIN ZOO RECAP

Wow! Can you believe our trip to the Brain Zoo is already over? Let's go over each part of the Brain Zoo that we visited and remember what we learned.

First, we stopped at the Friendship Rainforest where we met a bunch of different types of birds.

We learned how making friends can help us build a social support system that will prevent us from feeling alone and that friends can help us during hard times.

Also, we learned that friendship helps our brain stay healthy which helps our Social Health.

Next, we visited the Movement Safari where we learned that cheetahs can run up to 80 miles an hour!

We also learned about how physical activity not only makes our muscles stronger, but it makes our brains stronger too.

Moving our body – and eating and sleeping - will make our brains healthy which helps our Physical Health.

Then, we stopped by the Moody Arctic where we learned about all of the different emotions we can feel.

We learned that it is healthy to feel sad sometimes and we learned that understanding our own feelings can help us understand other people's feelings too.

Most importantly, just like in the Friendship Rainforest and Movement Safari, we learned that understanding our feelings can make our brain healthy which helps our Emotional Health.

Finally, we made it to the Thinking Jungle with the very smart gorillas and elephants.

When we were in the Thinking Jungle, we learned that when we try something new, our brains change.

And we learned that when our brain is changing, that means that our brain is healthy – great for our Cognitive Health.

SLIDE #23 – DIFFERENT ZOOS – DIFFERENT BRAINS

We visited different parts of the Brain Zoo today, but it is important to remember that every single one of us has a unique Brain Zoo inside of our heads.

While all Brain Zoos have the Friendship Rainforest, Movement Safari, Moody Arctic, and Thinking Jungle, each unique Brain Zoo may have different animals that are better at some things than others.

So, even if you want to have the same Brain Zoo as your best friend, you both have different parts of your Brain Zoos that make you unique and special.

SLIDE # – CONCLUSION

Thank you all for letting me take you through the Brain Zoo.

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 is like a zoo. It has different parts that help you do different things.

In the Friendship Rainforest we learned how making friends can help us build a social support system that will prevent us from feeling alone and that friends can help us during hard times – good for Social Health.

In the Movement Safari we learned about how physical activity not only makes our muscles stronger, but it makes our brains stronger too – good for Physical Health.

In the Moody Arctic we learned that understanding our own feelings can help us understand other people's feelings too – good for Emotional Health.

In the Thinking Jungle we learned that when we think and learn something new, our brains change – good for our Cognitive Health.

So, you see, 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!!!