



Being Afraid Can Help You-WHAT?!? (🧠 An Emotional Health Story)
(2nd – 7-8 yrs.)
Physical Activity: Automatic or Intentional



STORY CONNECTION-SLIDES 3-4 (Approx Time: 10-15 mins)

When a zebra is in the wild and sees a lion, then the best thing for the zebra to do is run. To be able to run – and run fast – the zebra's heart needs to pump blood to the zebra's muscles and then the zebra's legs need to move. Because this needs to happen fast – it is best for the zebra's brain not to have to think about doing all this. The zebra's brain needs to do this automatically. The zebra's brain has a whole system – called the Autonomic Nervous System (or ANS for short) – that can activate the zebra's heart automatically. This lets the zebra run away from the lion. The autonomic system acts automatically and controls the zebra's heart, lungs, stomach, and other organs. The activation of the ANS is a fear response in the zebra that makes them behave quickly – in this case running away from the lion who wants to eat them.

Materials needed:

- Space for student(s) to move to one of three different areas (Automatic-Intentional-Both)
- List of actions: automatic/intentional/both (included below)

Preparation needed:

- Select and secure space for activity
- Optional: Label areas of the room (Automatic-Intentional-Both)
- List of actions readily available (use suggested or create your own)

Instructions:

1. In this activity, student(s) will move to one of three areas in the room/space based on an action that animals perform.
2. Begin by introducing the vocabulary words and discussing the meaning of **automatic** and **intentional**. Relate the words back to the story of the zebra and lion. Give additional examples as needed to make sure student(s) understand.
 - Automatic behaviors are ones that usually involve the autonomic nervous system/reflexes/or both.
 - Intentional behaviors are also known as voluntarily and ones that we can decide whether or not to do.
3. Explain to the student(s) that an action will be read. The student(s) will determine then move to the area that they think tells what kind of action that is. The three areas are Automatic, Intentional, and Both. For example: If the action "blinking" is called out, I would think about how animals don't actually have to think to blink but can blink when they want too. Therefore, it is an automatic and intentional action. I would move to this area of the room (gesture there)."
4. Ask student(s) if they have any questions or need any clarification. Clear up any misunderstandings.

5. All student(s) will start in the center of the space.
6. Read an action.
7. After all student(s) have made a choice and moved to that area, have student(s) tell why they made the choices they made and check for correctness.
8. Repeat the activity as many times as desired.
9. In conclusion, have student(s) get with a partner and tell each other, in their own words, what automatic actions our bodies perform and why they do them.
10. Have a couple of groups share what they talked about.

Automatic animal actions:

- Yawning
- Hiccapping
- Moving tongue to talk
- Balancing when moving
- Sneezing
- Shivering
- Blushing

Intentional animal actions:

- Throwing a baseball
- Making a phone call
- Doing homework
- Riding a bike
- Yelling at a sibling
- Singing
- Painting a picture
- Reading a book
- Getting a drink of water
- Hugging someone

Actions that are both (automatic/intentional)

- Chewing
- Swallowing
- Blinking
- Smiling
- Crying
- Stretching when waking up
- Running