



## Being Afraid Can Help You – WHAT?!? (🌈 An Emotional Health Story) (2<sup>nd</sup> Grade – 7-8 yrs)

This story describes how fear can actually help you to learn and stay alive.

- 🌈 Fear is a natural emotion and all animals have it.
- 🌈 When you are afraid of something, your body tells your brain. Your brain then helps you to get ready to deal with the situation. It is good to learn what scares you, so you can figure out how to deal with it.
- 🌈 Different things scare different people. Too much fear can hurt both your body and your 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.

This story is about Emotional Health – which is the E in SPECTacular. Emotional Health helps your brain stay healthy when you understanding 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 – BEING AFRAID CAN HELP YOU – WHAT?!?

Fear is an emotion that lots of animals share.

It turns out that being afraid actually helps you to behave in a way that will help animals stay alive.

When you see, hear, smell or touch something that has the potential to hurt you, then your brain turns on a system that automatically helps you.

In this story, we will talk about how understanding how your body reacts to dangerous situations can help you.

### **SLIDE #3 – ZEBRA & LION**

When a zebra is in the wild and sees a lion, then best thing for the zebra to do is run.

In order 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.

### **SLIDE #4 – ANS**

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 nervous 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.

### **SLIDE #5 – AFRAID**

People also have fear responses when they come in contact with things that scare them (luckily, we do not usually run into lions that want to eat us!).

Let’s say you are at the playground and you see a slide. You climb up a really high ladder to get to the slide.

It is a really high slide and when you get to the top, your heart starts to pump really fast. You also start breathing really fast and your hands may get all sweaty.

You feel something else – you are afraid of being up this high.

### **SLIDE #6 – SNAKE**

Or, let’s say you are going for a walk in the woods with your friends and you look down and you see a giant snake in the middle of the path.

It is a big snake and it stops and raises its head to look at you.

All at once your heart starts to pump really fast. You also start breathing really fast and your hands may get all sweaty.

Again, you and your friend are feeling afraid – you really do not like snakes.

### **SLIDE #7 – SMOKE**

Or, let's say that while you are going for a walk you smell smoke. You know that smoke means fire and you are in the woods with lots of things that can burn.

All at once your heart starts to pump really fast. You also start breathing really fast and your hands may get all sweaty.

Again, you are feeling afraid – you are afraid of getting burned up in a forest fire.

### **SLIDE # 8 – FEAR LETS OUR BRAIN PROTECT US**

Fear is the emotion that some of us feel when we are in high places, see scary snakes or smell fire.

In all of these cases, our senses are telling us that there is something that could potentially hurt us.

Because we could get hurt, this is why our brain has turned on our ANS automatically for us.

Our brain is trying to help us to behave in a way that will protect us.

### **SLIDE # 9 – CHANGE OUR BEHAVIORS**

In the case of the very high slide, we may decide that because we can see how high we are on the slide that closing our eyes is a good thing to do. You close your eyes and go down the slide.

In the case of the snake, we may decide to stand still and wait until the snake decides to move on before we continue our walk.

In the case of the fire, we may decide to turn around and go the other way. Because the fire could hurt more than just us, we also need to tell someone else about the fire. That way the forest, which has trees and animals, also will not get hurt.

### **SLIDE #10 – OUR BRAIN PROTECTS US**

Being able to understand that fear is the emotion that we feel when we encounter something that could hurt us is the first step.

Being able to understand that our brain is helping our body to get ready to handle the situation will make us less nervous about our heart beating faster or hands getting sweaty.

Good emotional health is being able to understand that when we are afraid of something, our brain is ready to help us to handle what is scaring us. Our brain will protect us.

Understanding what is scaring us and then dealing with it will help our brain and our body stay healthy.

### **SLIDE #11 – DEALING WITH YOUR FEAR**

Plus, it turns out that once we understand what we are afraid of – then we can avoid those situations in the future, or we can come up with ways to deal with it.

You may be afraid of high places now and that may change over time, or you may just come up with ways to deal with your fear.

When you go down a high slide, you may have so much fun – doing it with your eyes closed - that you may decide it is worth a little bit of being scared because it was so much fun.

Or, you may decide that you really do not high places – so, at the playground you decide to spin instead of the sliding.

Sometimes you cannot always avoid the things that scare you, so you come up with other ways to control your fear. So, you decide that when you are climbing the stairs at school to get to the fifth floor – it is best to focus your attention on what is in front of you and do not look down.

## **SLIDE #12 – UNDERSTANDING WHAT SCARES YOU**

When you understand what is scaring you, then other parts of your brain can turn off your ANS.

When your heart is not pumping fast, and you are not breathing fast and your hands are not sweaty, then you may find that what was scaring you is no longer scary.

That big snake that you saw in the woods that made you scared before, now makes you curious about how snakes move.

You started watching shows about snakes and found out that they were really cool.

You learned that there are lots of snakes that are not dangerous and that they were probably more afraid of you than you are of them.

You may not ever really love snakes, but in learning about them you find that you are no longer afraid of them.

## **SLIDE #13 – FEAR IS GOOD**

When it comes to our emotions, there is usually a reason why we have them.

Being afraid of things and feeling fear can actually help us to behave in situations that are potentially dangerous to us.

Our senses tell us that there is something that could hurt us and then our brain automatically gets our body ready to help us.

Just like the zebra and the lion, the brain is designed to help us to stay alive – and not get hurt.

## **SLIDE #14 – UNDERSTANDING OUR EMOTIONS**

Understanding what is scaring us and figuring out ways to deal with what is scaring us is very important for our emotional health.

When we understand our emotions, we can then help our brain (which is always helping us) to stay healthy.

It is also very important to understand that because we are all different, and that our brains are all different, that some things that may scare you may not scare other people.

And some things that scare other people may not scare you.

## **SLIDE #15 – DIFFERENT THINGS SCARE DIFFERENT PEOPLE**

Talking to lots of people may be really scary for some people, but I LOVE it.

Sharing what I know and love about the brain makes me happy – which makes my brain happy.

Jumping out of an airplane with a parachute on my back – does not make me happy – it is really scary to me.

So, you will not ever see me skydiving!!! But, some people LOVE it.

### **SLIDE #16 – COMMUNICATION**

You need to understand that things that make some people afraid will not make everyone afraid.

Talking to people about your fears, just like talking to people about other emotions, is important. This way people will understand you and you can understand them.

Communication – talking to others – is definitely a good way to keep your brain and your body safe and healthy.

### **SLIDE # – CONCLUSION**

Thank you all for letting me talk to you about how being afraid can help you to stay safe and make your brain happy and healthy.

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, it is important to understand what scares you and know that your bodies response to things that scare you is just your brain helping to get your body ready to respond to what is scaring you. Your brain is protecting you. Sometimes that means staying away from what scares you and sometimes that means learning more about what scares you and how to deal with it. Helping your brain stay healthy is good for your Emotional Health and a healthy brain is SPECTacular.

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