

Making Neuroscience Fun

A Brain Awareness Program for All Ages



Brain Health: It's SPECTacular

Story General Information

I Can Handle It...I Got It (🧠 A Social Health Story) (4th Grade – 9-10 yrs.)

This story talks about how to come up with ways to handle challenges that you face.

- You need to understand when you are in “over your head”.
- Coping mechanisms are things that you can do to handle challenging situations. (COPE – Choose Our Personal Escape)
- Different coping mechanisms work for different challenges.

The facilitator begins by introducing themselves, neuroscience, and the program: Brain Health: It's SPECTacular. The facilitator defines SPECTacular for the children as meaning “great” and discusses how having a SPECTacular brain means having a healthy and happy brain. They share that the letter **S** represents Social Health. In this story, children learn how to identify when they are in “over their head” and about different coping mechanisms to help handle those situations.

Growing older means opportunities for more responsibility. However, more responsibilities can also be overwhelming and challenging. The facilitator explains this story helps the children learn how to handle challenges effectively. One job of the brain is to learn. The brain is constantly learning and learning about challenges can not only help with survival but also encourage their ability to thrive in this world. Throughout the story, the facilitator refers to a baby zebra learning that lions are predators.

Although children do not often face life or death situations (like the baby zebra), challenges can still cause immense stress for them. The facilitator describes the body's physical response to stress. Too much stress is not good for the body or brain. So once the children recognize they are stressed, it is important to identify the challenge that is causing stress. Recognizing the culprit of the stress helps the brain avoid those situations in the future or be prepared to handle them next time through coping mechanisms.

To explain coping mechanisms to the children, the facilitator introduces the mnemonic device C.O.P.E, which stands for Choose Our Personal Escape. Being able to “escape” the bad effects of stressful situations helps the body and brain stay healthy. Every person responds differently to stress and will use different coping mechanisms to overcome the challenges they face. A person might use different coping mechanisms for different situations too.

The facilitator introduces a relatable scenario for the children. The children must present a project to their class. The facilitator guides the children through different coping mechanisms (making/initiating a plan, talking to their support system, implementing calming techniques) they could use depending on which part of the scenario is causing stress. Understanding personal strengths and weaknesses also helps someone cope with stressful situations. If they are aware of their weaknesses, they can be prepared for what might be more challenging for them.

The facilitator emphasizes that the children want to be able to confidently say, “*I can handle it.. I got it!*” no matter what comes their way. By using COPE and implementing techniques that help them, the children can eliminate or get a handle of stress before it gets out of control. Managing these situations helps the brain stay happy, healthy, and SPECTacular!

Story Objectives:

- Students will recognize that growing older means facing new challenges.
- Students will provide examples of challenges they may face.
- Students will describe how their body may physically respond to challenges.
- Students will define “*over your head.*”
- Students will identify different coping mechanisms to help overcome or handle challenges.
- Students will recognize that different challenges may need different coping mechanisms.
- Students will explain the acronym for C.O.P.E.
- Students will brainstorm how they might C.O.P.E.
- Students will describe how overcoming challenges by using coping mechanisms improves their Social Health.