



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.

🌈 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 Social Health – which is the S in SPECTacular. Social Health means you are keeping your brain healthy by being social.

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

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

When you are nice to yourself and others, that makes your brain healthy.

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

🌈 SLIDE #2 – I Can Handle It...I Got It

As you get older, you have more and more responsibilities. People think – and rightly so – that you can do more things on your own.

You may be expected to manage your own time – which is kind of nice because people are not telling you what to do all the time.

You like that people trust you more to do what you are supposed to do. That makes you feel good about yourself.

Along with your newfound freedoms, comes challenges.

In school, you are expected to work more by yourself – independently.

At home, you may be responsible for taking care of yourself and you may even have to help more to take care of others.

Things with your friends and peers are getting a bit more complicated. People are starting to form “groups” and you may not always be invited.

Yes, there are challenges that come with growing up and being more responsible for yourself. Learning how to identify and deal with the challenges now will help your brain to stay healthy.

SLIDE #3 – CHALLENGES

One thing that you need to realize is that there are always going to be challenges. But, humans are not the only ones that have challenges – all animals have challenges.

Lucky for us, our challenges do not usually involve life and death situations.

If you are a baby zebra in Africa, you need to learn early on that lions are not your friends. A baby zebra must learn that lions will eat them. If a baby zebra learns this, then the zebra will grow up.

I bet having to learn how to work independently in school is sounding pretty easy right now – as compared to our baby zebra friend. Being able to finish our assignments in school is not a situation that is life or death.

Lucky for all animals, we all have a brain that helps us to learn about the challenges we face. Our brain helps us to remember what we learn about the challenges that we face so that we can survive in the world.

SLIDE #4 – CHALLENGES CAN BE STRESSFUL

But, just because our challenges are not usually “life and death” situations, that does not mean that they are not difficult. They are called “challenges” for a reason.

If we are faced with a challenge that we think is too hard for us to handle, then this can activate our stress response.

Our heart may start beating faster, we may feel sick to our stomach, and we may feel all kinds of different emotions (like being angry, sad, or scared).

As a neuroscientist, I know that stress can be a good thing.

When there is a little bit of stress, it gets your body ready to do something – like run if you are zebra and you see a lion.

As a neuroscientist, I also know that stress can be a bad thing.

When there is a lot of stress or the stress lasts for too long a time, then it can hurt your body and your brain.

SLIDE #5 – OVER YOUR HEAD

So, what do you do?

The first thing that you need to do is to figure out how you know when you are facing challenges that are stressing you out. Or, when you feel like you are in “over your head”.

At your age, you are really starting to know yourself. Being able to listen to what your body is telling you will help you to figure out when you are in “over your head”.

You may feel your heart racing and your palms are getting sweaty.

You may feel dizzy or nauseous – like you are going to throw up.

You may feel emotional – sad, angry or scared.

You may have trouble concentrating or thinking.

You may have lots of negative thoughts and feelings.

You may not be able to eat or sleep or sit still.

You may just want a hug.

SLIDE #6 – IDENTIFY THE CHALLENGE

You know what kinds of things that you can do with no problem and you know the kinds of things that are challenging for you.

If you are feeling any of these things, then ask yourself...what is making me feel like this?

If you cannot figure it out, then talk to someone in your support system.

Being able to identify what challenges make you feel like you are in “over your head” is part of growing up.

This is something that you can do to help your brain avoid the type of stress that can damage your brain’s health.

So, listen to your body and try to identify the challenge the is causing you to feel like you are in “over your head”.

SLIDE #7 – DIFFERENT THINGS CHALLENGE DIFFERENT PEOPLE

Now, different challenges are going to be harder and easier for some people.

I would NEVER jump out of a plane with a parachute on my back if I did not have to – and yet, some people LOVE skydiving. They think that it is fun – YIKES!!!

I LOVE to talk to people about the brain. You can put me in an auditorium and I can (and have) talk to hundreds or thousands of people about the brain. So public speaking, is fun for me. For some, the idea of having to talk in front of people makes them sick.

Lucky for me, I will probably never be in a situation where I have to jump out of a plane with a parachute, but lots of people have to talk in front of people.

Being able to handle challenges that make us feel like we are “over our heads” is also part of growing up. And, just like being able to identify challenges that make us feel like we are in “over our heads”, being able to handle these challenges will also help our brain stay healthy.

SLIDE #8 – COPE

When you are in “over your head”, you just need to come up with ways to handle, deal or COPE with the challenge.

To COPE with challenges, we all need to - Choose Our Personal Escape.

For animals in the wild, they literally have to “escape” from situations because they face a lot of life and death situations – think baby zebra and lion.

For people, we need to come up with ways to cope so that we can “escape” from the bad effects that too much stress can have on our bodies and our brain health.

SLIDE #9 – I CAN HANDLE IT! I GOT IT!

There are lots of ways to cope with challenging situations. And, because we are all different, you need to find the coping mechanisms that work for you.

So, if you are getting stressed out because of a project that you have to do that you will have to present in front of the entire class – what can you do to cope with the challenge?

Take control of the situation. You want to be able to say, “I can handle it...I got it”.

Being prepared is the first thing that you can do. A lot of times a challenge can make you feel like you are in “over your head” because you feel like you have no control over the situation.

Come up with a plan for your project. Talk to other people to help you get ideas of what you want to do. Have fun with your project. Do not think of it as a chore, but as something that you can do that will be helping your brain stay healthy.

SLIDE #10 – COPING

You also need to understand that there are different ways to cope depending on the situation that you are in.

So, if you are working on your project and you are feeling overwhelmed, then do something that will help you to calm down so that you can focus on your project.

Go for a walk, exercise, bake, clean something, talk to someone about the project, whatever you like to do that will help to calm you down. These some ways to cope, but remember, you need to find something that works for you.

You want to be able to say, “I can handle it...I got it”.

Now, let’s say that your project is done and you are now getting ready to present it to the class. You are again feeling **like** you in “over your head”. What do you do? You cannot go for a walk or exercise now – so what do you do to cope with the situation?

SLIDE #11 –

First, remember...some of the way your body is feeling may be just getting you ready to present your project. So, feeling a little bit nervous or anxious is ok – feeling like you want to throw up – not so much.

If you are again feeling like you are in “over your head”, there are other ways to cope.

Take a deep breath and blow it out. Close your eyes and think of something that makes you happy. Think about your project and how much fun you had doing it and think about being able to share it with you class. Sharing what you learned while doing your project will probably help them and helping other people is a good thing to do. Practice your presentation. The more comfortable you feel with your presentation, the easier it will be to present it in front of people.

Be prepared for this situation and talk to others about ways to cope when you have to talk in front of people. Asking for help is always a good idea and this is why we have support systems.

You want to be able to say, “I can handle it...I got it”.

SLIDE #12 – STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

The other thing to remember is that you should not be ashamed or embarrassed because you are feeling challenged, while others are not.

Remember, everyone is different. We all have different strengths and weaknesses. Knowing what you are good at and what things challenge you is a good thing. Because you can always work to deal with your challenges.

SLIDE #13 – I CAN HANDLE IT! I GOT IT!

Being able to identify when you are feeling in “over your head” and coming up with lots of ways to cope with various challenges is something that is going to help you throughout your life.

Growing up means learning how to cope with challenges so you can do what you need to do so that you can survive in the world. Just like the baby zebra has to learn about lions, you need to cope with challenging situations that you will encounter.

In school, you are going to be expected to work more by yourself – and you may need to present your work to the class.

At home, you may be responsible for taking care of yourself and you may even have to help more to take care of others.

Things with your friends and peers are getting a bit more complicated. People are starting do form “groups” and you may not always be invited.

You are going to face lots of challenges and coming up with different ways to cope with different challenges will help you to keep your brain healthy.

You want to be able to say, “I can handle it...I got it”. This will make you feel good about yourself – which definitely makes your brain healthy.

SLIDE #14 – CONCLUSION

Thank you all for letting me talk to you about how to cope with challenges.

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, you are going to be facing lots of challenges in your life. You want to be able to identify when you are in a situation that is making you feel like you are in “over your head”. You also want to start coming up with ways that help you to cope with challenging situations. These skills will help you to feel good about yourself and allow you to say, “I can handle it...I got it”. And that will definitely help your brain stay healthy – which is SPECTacular.

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