

Making Neuroscience Fun

A Brain Awareness Program for All Ages



Brain Health: It's SPECTacular

Story General Information

A SPECTacular Way to Think Outside the Box (🧠 A Brain Health Story) (3rd Grade – 8-9 yrs.)

This story looks at how “thinking outside of the box” can help children incorporate what they are learning about SPEC health to help them come up with new ways to keep their brain healthy.

- Prior to this age, children were learning to read. Now, children are reading to learn about new subjects that may help them to identify their talents and learn how to think.
- By “thinking outside of the box”, we discuss how prioritizing sleep helps children with many aspects of their SPEC health.
- Throughout the story, we discuss how “thinking outside of the box” does not need to be done alone; people in a child’s support system can help.

The facilitator begins by introducing themselves, neuroscience, and the program, Brain Health: It’s SPECTacular. Brain Health is about maintaining a happy, healthy brain to feel good. The beginning letters of SPECTacular (SPEC) each represent a component of Brain Health the children have learned about in previous stories. The facilitator reviews each component (Social, Physical, Emotional, and Cognitive) and its importance to staying healthy and happy. This summative story explores the concept of “thinking outside the box” and how it can be beneficial to their overall brain health.

By stressing to the children the importance of learning new information and trying new things, the facilitator explains how this may open up opportunities in the future. Everyone is different; therefore, the skills and talents of people are unique to them. The more exploring and learning the children do early on the greater their exposure is to different activities or subjects. The greater their exposure the higher the chance they have of finding something that sparks their interest and discover where their skills lie. Being open to these opportunities means they are “thinking outside the box.”

Sometimes, “thinking outside the box” means the children try a new and different way of completing a task or activity. It may be making a real world connection or finding the relevance of the information to their life. The children are reassured that they do not have to do this alone. People in their *support system* are there to help make connections and make new concepts relevant. The facilitator shares a scenario about the significance of learning about hurricanes even if the children do not live near the coast. Thinking about new information differently can deepen their level of understanding. The brain is designed to think and it loves to think in new ways!

To be able to “think outside the box” the brain needs energy. Energy comes from sleep. As the children grow older, their to-do list grows longer. The facilitator introduces the term *prioritize* and defines it for the children. They discuss the importance of prioritizing needs and wants while putting an emphasis on Physical Health. Without proper sleep, the brain and body will not function correctly. It will be challenging to complete important tasks of the day and lack of sleep really affects Emotional Health too. Lack of sleep and stress can cause emotional outburst and poor decisions. When people run low on energy, they often choose “yummy” foods that do not always give the body the proper nutrients it needs. With little energy and nutrients, the body does not

want to move like it should. Helping the children change the way they think about certain tasks or concepts like bedtime will help develop important routines and behaviors that will not only improve their Physical Health but also their overall brain health.

When the body and brain are physically being taken care of by carefully prioritizing tasks, “thinking outside of the box” is something to be enjoyed. It is a way to come up with new creative ideas for yourself, school, and beyond! A brain that “thinks outside the box” is a happy, healthy SPECTacular brain!

Story Objectives:

- Students will define “*thinking outside the box*” and provide examples.
- Students will reflect on and identify their personal support system.
- Students will define *prioritize* and explain why it is an important skill to develop for overall Brain Health.
- Students will discuss daily activities and how to manage or prioritize them to improve Brain Health.
- Students will describe how lack of sleep impacts their Social, Physical, Emotional, and Cognitive Health.
- Students will explain how “*thinking outside the box*” improves their overall Brain Health.