

Making Neuroscience Fun

A Brain Awareness Program for All Ages



Brain Health: It's SPECTacular

Story General Information

I Want It Now!!! (🌈 An Emotional Health Story) (3rd Grade- 8-9 yrs.)

This story talks about learning how to control impulsive behaviors that are triggered by extreme emotions.

- A temper tantrum is an example of an impulsive behavior that is often caused when someone cannot control their behavioral response to an emotional situation.
- The part of the brain that controls your impulses does not fully develop until late adolescence. This is why children often exhibit behaviors that are out of control; they have not learned to control their emotional responses.
- Being able to identify and control your emotional responses, especially when your brain is not adequately developed to do so, will help you to limit irrational and socially unacceptable behaviors. These strategies will also help you to keep your brain healthy.

The facilitator begins by introducing themselves, neuroscience, and the program: Brain Health: It's SPECTacular. The facilitator breaks down the meaning of SPEC for the children and discusses how the letter **E** represents Emotional Health. Emotional Health is an important part of keeping the brain healthy and happy. In this story, the children learn about impulsive behaviors, why they happen, and how to learn to control them. Understanding emotions, the responses they invoke, and how to better manage those emotions helps keep the brain healthy.

To help the children make an initial personal connection to the content, the facilitator leads a discussion about really wanting something they cannot have. They discuss certain situations like not getting a toy, wanting to stay up late, or seeking attention that may create responses such as anger, screaming, and yelling. All of those raw emotions can lead to a huge temper tantrum. The facilitator explains to the children why babies and toddlers are prone to these emotional outburst. The brain is not developed enough yet to understand why someone says "no" or they cannot talk/communicate well enough to really explain what they want. However, the brain is still developing into mid/late 20s; therefore, older kids, adolescents, and even young adults can also have these impulses.

The facilitator dives deeper into a relatable scenarios for the children: wanting to play on a tablet during class. In this discussion, the facilitator introduces frontal lobes, the part of their brain that controls behaviors. When the frontal lobes are underdeveloped, it means someone will respond emotionally, without thinking. This is why a child may yell at their teacher when they are asked to put away their tablet in class.

Impulsive behaviors are not only emotional, but can also be risky. When the frontal lobes are still developing, young people can put themselves in dangerous situations, such as running in front of a car or touching a hot stove, without even thinking about the consequences of that action.

So how can children control their emotions and keep themselves safe even as their brain is still developing? The facilitator identifies several coping mechanisms for the children to use. The first big step is to stop and

think. Encouraging the children to initiate a thoughtful moment by counting to ten in the midst of an emotional moment trains them to pause and evaluate the situation. Next, they should think about what behaviors are acceptable and the effects of their actions. The intent of these steps is to give the thinking part of the brain time to catch up with the emotional part of the brain. Another important part of controlling these impulsive behaviors is to understand what triggers them, the action or emotion. Exaggerated emotions can be fueled by hunger or lack of sleep. Maintaining good Physical Health while the body and brain are developing is important.

Being able to identify personal emotions, triggers, and implementing coping mechanisms to control impulsive behaviors are important skills to develop and hone throughout someone's life. The facilitator emphasizes this to the children as they review the significance of these to their Emotional Health and maintaining a happy, healthy SPECTacular brain.

Story Objectives:

- Students will describe what a *temper tantrum* may look or sound like.
- Students will list causes of a temper tantrum.
- Students will explain the science behind why a person has a temper tantrum.
- Students will define *impulse control* and *frontal lobes*.
- Students will list and describe *impulsive behaviors*.
- Students will explain ways to prevent impulsive behaviors, even in a developing brain.
- Students will explain the importance of identifying and naming their emotions.
- Students will describe how impulse control improves Emotional Health.