



The Brain Changes All the Time (🧠 A Brain Facts Story)
(5th Grade – 10-11 yrs.)
Brainstorm: Surviving and Thriving



STORY CONNECTION – SLIDE 17 (Approx Time: 20-25 min)

Your brain is designed to help you adapt and survive in a world that is always changing. We know the brain controls behaviors and that when you do behaviors, you change your brain. This is known as neuroplasticity, which could be changing the number of cells in the brain, or changing how they work, or changing the blood flow to different brain areas, or any combination of these and more changes we do not even know about yet! Neuroplasticity – or the brain's ability to change - is what allows us to constantly change how we behave in the world. It not only allows us to survive – but it allows us to thrive. Your brain's ability to change helps it to do its job and that helps to make our brain healthy.

Materials needed:

- White board or chart paper
- Markers
- Pencils
- Surviving and Thriving worksheet (included below) or paper

Preparation needed:

- Determine a story/example to share with student(s) to paint a picture of the difference between *survive* and *thrive*. (An example is included if you chose to use it.)
- Print worksheet (1 per student)

Instructions:

1. In this activity, the student(s) will focus on the difference between surviving and thriving. As a group, they will brainstorm examples of both concepts in different environments. They will then reflect on their own situations and see what they need to not only survive but thrive.
2. First, write the word SURVIVE on the board or chart paper and have the student(s) brainstorm words, thoughts, or ideas that come to mind when they hear this word.
 - They might say things like staying alive, just enough, life, getting by, the TV show, essential, necessary, needs, food, water, air, etc.
3. Next, write the word THRIVE on the board or chart paper and have the student(s) brainstorm words, thoughts, or ideas that come to mind when they hear this word.
 - This might be a bit tougher for them.
 - They might say things like prosper, bloom, healthy, successful, getting ahead, wants, more than enough, etc.

4. Give an example or tell a story to the student(s) that will paint a picture of a difference between the two words to make sure they understand. Use an actual story or the one below.

For example, if someone is going on a hike, they are going to check to make sure the weather is going to be good on that day. They are going to take food, water, a compass, and other necessities with them. They are going to wear the appropriate clothing and hiking boots. Their cell phone will be fully charged, and they will let someone know they are going, just in case. They might have their pepper spray to protect them from any dangerous situations they might encounter. They will be prepared for all types of scenarios. The hiker will enjoy this adventure and will **thrive** on this hike.

However, let's say someone is out for a walk in the park one late afternoon and sees a trail they never noticed before. They decide to see where it leads. They continue on the path enjoying the beauty around them and not really paying attention to the fact that it is getting darker and cooler. They meander through the woods and before they know it, the sun has gone down quite a bit and it is cold. They are wearing only tennis shoes, shorts, and a short-sleeved T-shirt. They look around and nothing looks familiar. They have no cell phone service, and no one knows they are there. They try to find their way back to the park but by now it is completely dark, and they are completely turned around. This person is no longer interested in the beauty of the walking trail and enjoying this impromptu hike. They are more worried about **surviving** the cold night ahead of them.

5. Next, ask student(s) if they can write a personal/general statement that sums up their understanding of the difference between surviving and thriving. Have them write it at the bottom of the Surviving and Thriving Worksheet. Share the example and give them an allotted amount of time to write.

For example: *Surviving is when someone has the minimum of what they need to get by and thriving is when someone has all their basic needs met, so they can focus more on their wants, dreams, goals, etc.*

6. When time is over or all student(s) have completed their writing, ask for volunteers to share their personal statements.
7. Next, see if the group can come up with a class statement.
8. Have the student(s) write it at the bottom of the Surviving and Thriving Worksheet.
 - This will ensure that everyone has a similar and correct statement regarding the difference between the two concepts.
9. Ask student(s) to think about a time in the last week, month, or year that they were in "survival mode" and how this made them feel.
 - What emotions were they feeling? Anxiety, anger, fear?
 - Remind them to think about home, school, or other specific places where they have felt this way.
 - Have them turn and talk to someone near them about these experiences.
 - Have those who want to, share out with the whole group.
10. Explain that the final part of the activity will give them the opportunity to reflect on their own personal situations. They will list what they need to survive and areas where they can thrive. Remind student(s) that...
 - these lists will look different for everyone.
 - they are intended for them to use for themselves.
 - they will not be shared with the group.
11. In closing, remind student(s) that to thrive, we must have what we need to survive. Neuroplasticity – or the brain's ability to change - is what allows us to constantly change how we behave in the world. It not only allows us to survive – but it allows us to thrive. Our brain's ability to change helps it to do its job and that helps to make our body and brain happy and healthy.

Activity Idea Credit: <https://drewlewis.org/>

Survive and Thrive	Name:
What I Need to Survive	Where I Can Thrive
My <u>personal statement</u> on surviving versus thriving:	Our <u>class statement</u> on surviving versus thriving: