

Talk to My Brain: CBT Based Stories

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Book Discussion Guide

About the Book: *Talk to My Brain* is a collection of six illustrated stories designed to help young children (ages 5–9) develop emotional awareness and self-regulation. Drawing on principles of **Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT)**, the stories make complex ideas about thinking, feeling, and behavior understandable for young readers. The book helps children (and the adults who read with them) realize that:

- Thoughts, feelings, and behaviors are connected
- We can change how we feel by changing how we think or what we do
- Calming, flexible thinking, and kind self-talk can help in difficult moments

Though originally written for use in therapy, the tone is **warm, relatable, and informal**, making it equally effective as a **bedtime book, classroom resource, or therapeutic tool**. Each story includes discussion questions and activities to deepen reflection and reinforce learning.

How to Use This Guide

- **Read together slowly:** allow time for children to look at the pictures, share feelings, and make connections.
- **Encourage self-expression:** there are no “right” answers; curiosity and emotional awareness are key.
- **Model reflection:** adults can share examples from their own lives to normalize emotional learning.
- **Revisit the stories:** when similar challenges arise, ask the child to recall what one of the characters did.

Story-by-Story Overview, Discussion Points & Reflection Prompts

1. Shirley’s Story: “Talk to My Brain”

Main Theme: Mindfulness, deep breathing, and self-talk.

Core Idea: We can calm our minds by being aware of our thoughts and talking kindly to ourselves.

Discussion Points for Children:

- What helps Shirley feel calm when she’s upset?
- What does “talking to your brain” mean to you?
- How does breathing slowly help when we’re angry or worried?
- When could you use deep breathing in your day?

Reflection for Adults:

- How do you “talk” to your own mind when you’re stressed?
- What calming strategies do you already use, and which ones could you practice more often?
- When your child is upset, do you model calm breathing or positive self-talk?
- How might your own emotional tone affect your child’s ability to self-regulate?

2. Kevin’s Story: “Try Again and Try Again”

Main Theme: Growth mindset and persistence

Core Idea: Mistakes are part of learning; we grow by not giving up, and trying again.

Discussion Points for Children:

- What does Kevin do when things don’t work out at first?
- How does he show persistence?
- How did he feel after trying again?
- What’s something you’d like to keep trying at?

Reflection for Adults:

- How do you respond when you make mistakes or fail at something?
- What messages about success, effort, and failure do your children see from you?
- How can you model self-compassion and resilience?
- Are (or were) there moments when you give up quickly, and could you “try again” instead?

3. Shina’s Story: “Shoo Away the Unhelpful Thoughts”

Main Theme: Identifying and replacing unhelpful thoughts

Core Idea: Not every thought is true or useful, we can choose which thoughts to keep.

Discussion Points for Children:

- What kinds of thoughts made Shina feel bad?
- How did she learn to “shoo away” the unhelpful ones?
- What are some helpful thoughts you can use instead?

Reflection for Adults:

- What “unhelpful thoughts” do you notice most often in yourself (e.g., self-criticism, worry, guilt)?
- How do your own thought patterns affect your own personality, parenting or your emotional energy with children?
- Which CBT strategies or similar ideas do you already use, like reframing or perspective-taking?
- How can you model thought awareness for your child (e.g., “I’m feeling worried, so I’ll remind myself I can handle this”)?

4. Rinky’s Story: “What Do You Think?”

Main Theme: Fear of others’ opinions (mind reading)

Core Idea: We can’t always know what others are thinking, and that’s okay.

Discussion Points for Children:

- Why was Rinky worried about what others thought?
- What helped her feel more confident?
- How can we remind ourselves that others may not be judging us?

Reflection for Adults:

- Do you ever assume what others think about you, as a parent, professional, or person?
- How does this “mind reading” affect your confidence or relationships?
- What messages about self-worth do your children pick up from you?
- How can you model comfort with imperfection or social mistakes?

5. Miguel’s Story: “Be Flexible”

Main Theme: Coping with change and trying new approaches

Core Idea: When things change, we can adjust, flexibility helps us manage life’s ups and downs.

Discussion Points for Children:

- What change did Miguel struggle with?
- How did he learn to adapt?
- Why is being flexible important?

Reflection for Adults:

- How comfortable are you with change or uncertainty?
- Do you tend to be more rigid or adaptable when plans shift?
- What helps you “bend” instead of “break”?
- How do you encourage flexibility in your child? and do you show it yourself?

6. Rishi and Omar's Story: "Mean Should, You Should Go Away"

Main Theme: Challenging "should" thinking

Core Idea: Rigid self-demands ("I should be perfect") create stress; replacing them with gentler, realistic thoughts helps us feel better.

Discussion Points for Children:

- What are some "mean shoulds" Rishi and Omar had?
- How did those thoughts make them feel?
- What could they say to themselves instead?

Reflection for Adults:

- What "should" statements do you say to yourself (e.g., "I should be more patient," "I should always know what to do")?
- How do these rigid thoughts affect your emotional well-being or your parenting?
- What would change if you replaced "should" with "could" or "I'd like to"?
- How can you model self-kindness and flexibility to your child or clients?

Activity:

Write down a few "should" statements, then transform them into "could," "want to," or "prefer" statements.

Closing Reflection

For Children

- Which story did you like most?
- What helps you feel calm or confident?
- Which character do you want to be like?

For Adults

- Which story or character did *you* connect with most, and why?
- Which CBT ideas (breathing, reframing, flexible thinking, self-talk) do you already use?
- What new strategies could you practice for yourself, and model for children?
- How might reading these stories together strengthen your connection and shared emotional language?

Personal Reflections and Broader Connections

- How did the book make you feel?
- Did it change your thinking or remind you of real-life issues?
- How does it relate to current events or society?
- Comparisons to other books, movies, or works by the same author
- Lessons or takeaways

Final Thoughts

Talk to My Brain invites both children and adults to notice, name, and gently shape their inner worlds. By engaging with the stories and reflections, adults can strengthen their own emotional regulation while guiding children through theirs, creating a shared practice of mindfulness, flexibility, and self-compassion.