

**NG** NEXTGEN  
LEARNERS

*Presents:*



**THINK LIKE A BRAIN!<sup>TM</sup>**

Amy the Amygdala and the Overactive Alarm

Big feelings, fear & calming the alarm

**FREE SAMPLER**

For: Parents, Educators, & Co-Regulators

Presented by NGL Press  
**NextGen Learners LLC**  
Written By Maisel McLaula



# THIS BOOK IS ONE PIECE OF A BIGGER SYSTEM.

## **Amy the Amygdala is part of Think Like a Brain!™**

— a structured developmental pathway that walks children (and the adults who love them) through the brain from the bottom up. Each character is a different brain region, and each book is a different layer of how humans regulate, remember, perceive, connect, and grow.

You're not meant to piece this together on your own. The pathway is designed to build in order.

The developmental arc, from the ground up:

Benny the Brainstem — the foundation. Survival, regulation, the automatic body. Start here.

Bella the Cerebellum — balance, movement, rhythm, coordination.

Amy the Amygdala — the alarm system. Big feelings, fear, protection.

Hippocampus Hal — memory, meaning, and the story of "me."

Olly the Occipital Owl — sight, images, imagination, pattern.

Tammy Temporal — sound, language, and the music of a life.

Perry the Parietal — body maps, touch, space, and belonging.

Luna Lefty & Roger Righty — the two hemispheres, logic and art, list-making and daydreaming.

Callie the Connector — the bridge that lets all of it talk. Integration. Whole-brain thinking.

Each book stands on its own. Together, they form a bottom-up, trauma-informed, neurodevelopmentally-sequenced map of the human brain — written for children who are building themselves, and the grown-ups who are building alongside them.

Why the order matters. You cannot reason with a dysregulated brainstem. You cannot bridge two hemispheres that have never felt safe. The Think Like a Brain!™ pathway follows the same sequence real children use to grow: regulation first, then relationship, then reasoning. When you read these books in order — or reach for the one your child needs in the moment — you're matching the story to the layer of the brain that's doing the work.

Amy's place on the pathway. Amy sits in the third layer of the arc because the alarm system comes online before language, before logic, before memory makes full sense of the world. A child's amygdala reacts in less than a second — faster than thinking, faster than words. That's why Amy has to be met before Hal, Tammy, or the twins can do their jobs: a brain that doesn't feel safe cannot remember, narrate, or reason. Amy is the hinge between the regulating body below her (Benny and Bella) and the meaning-making mind above her. When Amy learns she is heard and safe, the whole upstairs brain gets to come online.

### **Disclaimer**

A gentle note. The Think Like a Brain!™ series is an educational and emotional literacy companion, not a replacement for medical, psychological, or therapeutic care. These books are grounded in developmental neuroscience and trauma-informed frameworks but are not diagnostic tools, treatment plans, or clinical interventions. If a child in your care is struggling with regulation, mental health, trauma, sensory processing, or development, please reach out to a qualified pediatrician, therapist, occupational therapist, or school counselor. The grown-ups who love a child are always the first and best line of support — and the grown-ups who get trained help are the ones who keep getting stronger at it. Trust yourself. Trust your team. Trust the pathway.

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# A QUIET NOTE FROM Maisel McLaula

These free pages are a small taste of something much bigger. Think Like a Brain!™ began as a love letter – to the children I’ve held, taught, and grown alongside, and to the grown-ups who stay up late worrying whether they’re getting it right. Every character, every printable, every breath script, every line of read-aloud guidance was built by hand, tested with real kids, and poured full of the thing I wish every child had: someone who believed their brain was not broken, just building.

Two ways to walk the full pathway:

## **The books.**

Each Think Like a Brain!™ title is a complete story with its own resource pages in the back – read-aloud prompts, age-by-age questions, regulation tools, and the science behind the character, all tucked into the final pages. The books alone are enough. They’re available wherever books are sold

## **The Activity Packs (like this one).**

These 24-page learning expansion packs are a deeper, classroom-and-clinic-ready companion to each book – role-play scripts, sorting mats, body-scan scripts, neurodivergent-affirming adaptations, parent and educator notes, and printables built to be hung, folded, and loved. The Activity Packs are exclusive to online customers at NextGenLearners.com and are not available anywhere else right now.

If this sampler was useful to a child you love, the full **Amy** Activity Pack is \$3 at NextGenLearners.com – and every pack you purchase keeps this small, independent press making more.



With so much love, Maisel McLaula NGL Publishing · NextGenLearners.com



# CHARACTER CARD

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## About Amy

Amy is the amygdala – a small, almond-shaped alarm system tucked deep inside the brain. She has big bright eyes, wild flame-orange hair, and wears a whistle around her neck because her whole job is to shout, “Heads up! Something matters!” Amy isn’t bad or broken when she yells loud – she’s trying to keep you safe. She notices faces, tones, surprises, and dangers faster than any other brain part. Her best friends are Perry the Prefrontal Cortex (who helps her calm down and think), Hal the Hippocampus (who remembers whether the scary thing was really scary), and Callie the Connector (who carries her messages across the brain). When Amy learns she is safe, she can rest. And when she rests, feelings soften.

# AMY'S



## READ-ALLOUD GUIDE

### Read-Aloud Guide

**Before reading:** Put a hand on your child's chest and say, "Let's meet Amy. She lives inside your brain and she cares a lot about you." Take three slow breaths together.

**During reading:** When Amy shouts in the story, make your voice louder. When she calms down, slow your voice and soften it. Pause on the pages where Amy is big-feeling and ask, "Have you ever felt like that?" Let silence be okay.

**After reading:** Ask, "What helps your Amy feel safe?" Write or draw the answers together. Remind them: Amy is never in trouble. She's just doing her job.



## Amy's Quote of the Day

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*When the alarm gets loud, turn down the light, just breathe slow and say, "I'm safe, you can rest tonight."*

## Amy's Promise

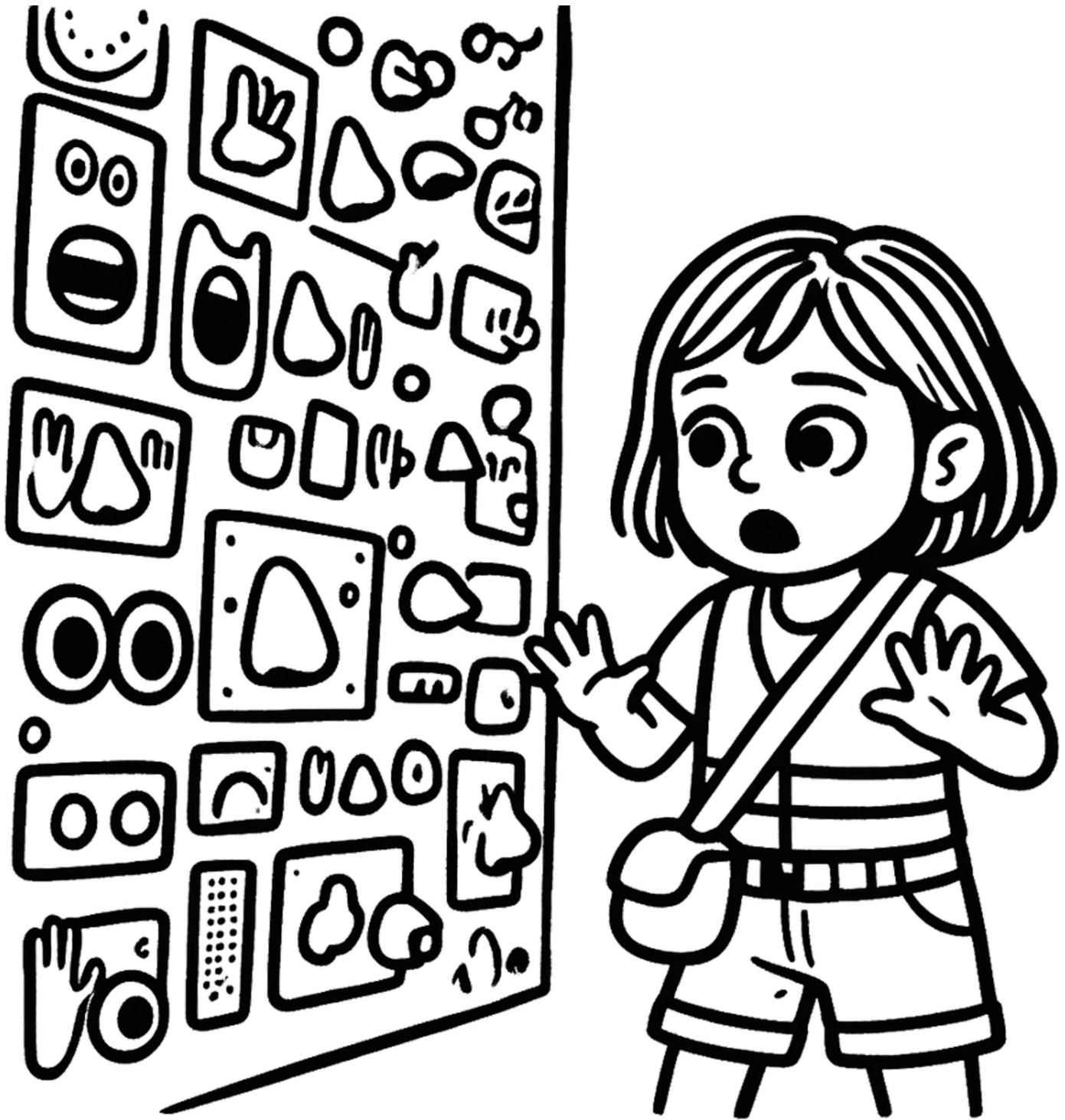
Every child who meets Amy gets the same gift: the knowledge that their fear is not a flaw, their big feelings are not failures, and somewhere inside them, a loud, loyal protector has been trying to keep them safe all along.

Their alarm was never the problem. It just needed to be heard.



# Amy's Alarm System

Color in the place where Amy sounds the alarm and keeps you safe.



*What does the alarm bell sound like inside?*

# THANK YOU



## WRITE TO US:

**[Inspire@NextGenLearners.com](mailto:Inspire@NextGenLearners.com)** – suggest a future book topic. Tell us what story a child in your life is waiting for.

**[Press@NextGenLearners.com](mailto:Press@NextGenLearners.com)** – for authors and creators who'd like to publish their own books with NGL.

**[Info@NextGenLearners.com](mailto:Info@NextGenLearners.com)** – general questions about other collections, products, or the NextGen Learners ecosystem.

**[Create@NextGenLearners.com](mailto:Create@NextGenLearners.com)** – send us your reviews, kid art, drawings, and creations inspired by the books. This is the “show us what you made“ mailbox, and it is our favorite one to open.

**[MaiselMcLaula@NextGenLearners.com](mailto:MaiselMcLaula@NextGenLearners.com)** – write directly to the author. Maisel reads every message.

## STAY CONNECTED

Visit the Learning Realm at [NextGenLearners.com](http://NextGenLearners.com) – free printables, book news, and the full *Think Like a Brain!*™ collection live there. Sign up for the newsletter while you're there for new resources, release dates, and the occasional gentle reminder that your brain is doing just fine.

## A NOTE FROM MAISEL

### **Thank you.**

For choosing Amy. For sitting beside a child while they learned that their loud, loyal amygdala has been trying to keep them safe all along. For reading slowly. For pausing when they asked questions. For trusting that stories can carry real science into a child's heart.

NGL Publishing is a small, independent imprint. Every book, printable, and free resource is made because a real child – somewhere – needed it. Your support is what keeps that going.

### **Share the Love**

If Amy helped a child you love, tell a friend, a teacher, a therapist. Word of mouth is how small presses grow big hearts. And if you'd like to leave a review – it truly does make all the difference.

– With gratitude,

*Maisel McLaula*