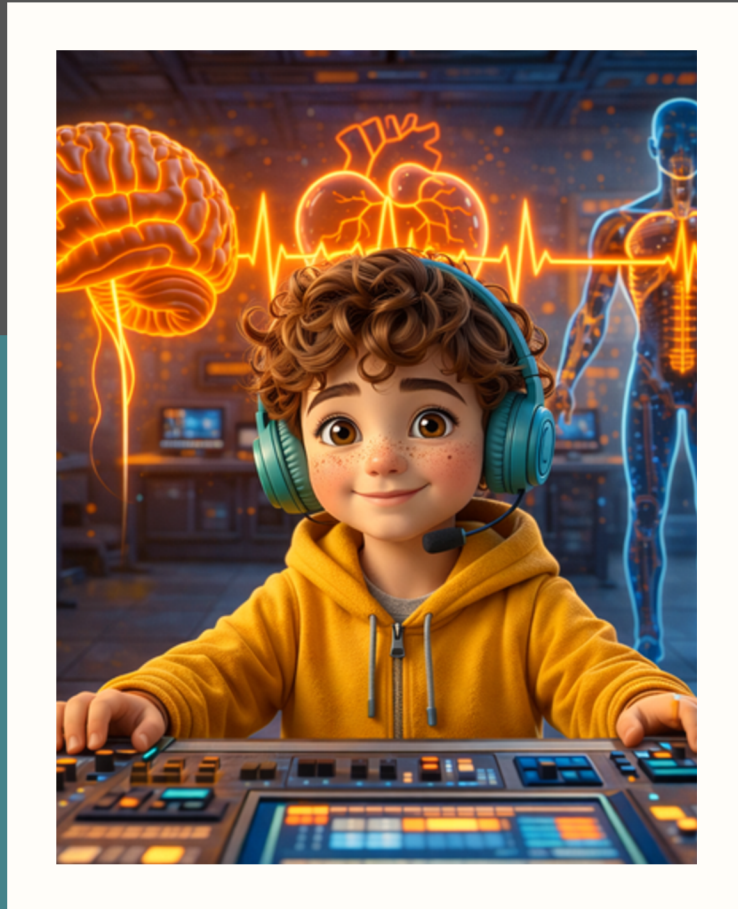


NG **NEXTGEN**
LEARNERS

Presents:



THINK LIKE A BRAIN!™

Brainsiem Benny & The Automatic Adventure

Breathing, heartbeat, survival basics

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.

Benny the Brainstem is where Think Like a Brain!™

begins — 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.

Benny's place on the pathway. Benny sits at the very bottom of the arc because nothing else works without him. The brainstem runs the heartbeat, the breath, the sleep-wake cycle, the swallow, the reflexes — the automatic rhythms of a living body. Before a child can name a feeling, remember a lesson, or bridge an argument, their brainstem has to feel safe. That's why Benny is the starting line. Reach for him first with any child who runs dysregulated, startled, exhausted, or flooded — and anchor the whole pathway in the steady, quiet work he never stops doing.

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.

© NGL Publishing · NextGen Learners, LLC · Use freely with the children in your care.

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 **Benny** 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

About Benny

Benny is the quiet hero of the Brainy Bunch. He lives in the brainstem – the part of the brain that handles all the automatic jobs a body needs to stay alive and steady. Breathing. Heartbeat. Blinking. Balance. Digestion. Temperature. The background rhythms nobody has to think about, because Benny never stops thinking about them for us.

Benny's personality is calm, small, steady, and humble. He wears a vest. He works in the “boiler room“ of the castle. He doesn't ask for applause, but the whole building falls apart when the others forget he's there. He's the book every anxious, overstimulated, or dysregulated child needs to meet – because he's living proof that their body already has a built-in helper keeping them safe.

BENNY'S



READ-ALOUD GUIDE

Before reading: Put one hand on your chest and one on your belly. Tell the child, “Something inside of you is breathing right now, and you’re not even telling it to. Let’s find out who’s doing that job.”

During reading: Pause after “Benny keeps balance, he handles the rest.” Ask: What are some things your body does by itself? Let them list. Don’t correct – collect.

After reading: “Benny’s been there your whole life. He was there when you were born. He’s there right now. He’ll be there tonight when you sleep.” Then a long, slow exhale together.



Benny's Quote of the Day

When feeling unwell, turn down the light, just sit & breathe, you'll start to feel right.

Benny's Promise

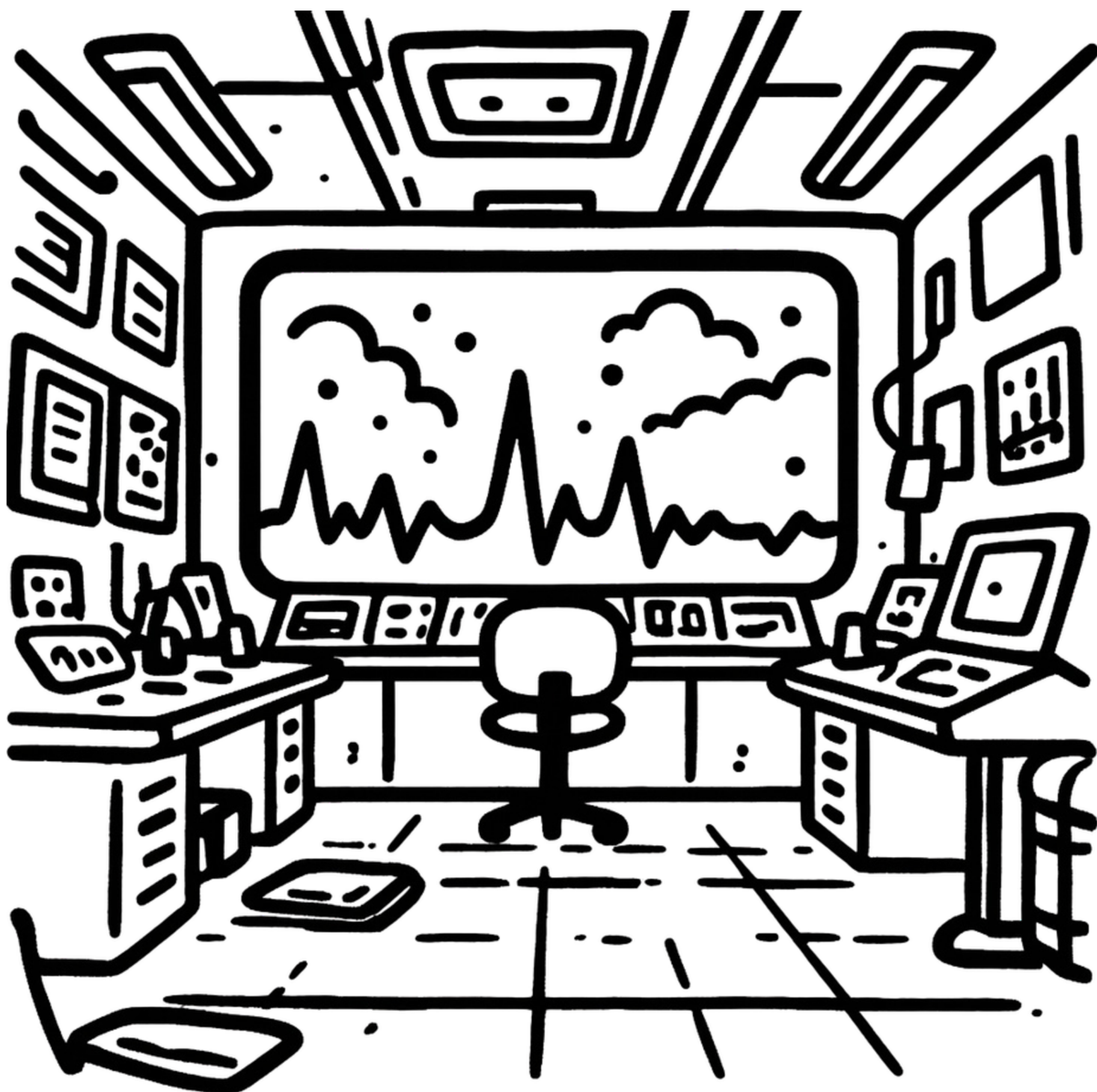


Every child who meets Benny gets the same gift: the knowledge that their body is not their enemy, their rest is not a failure, and somewhere inside them, a quiet, steady helper has never once stopped showing up.

They were never alone in there.

Benny's Boiler Room

Color in the place where Benny does his quiet work.



What's the quiet sound in the boiler room?

THANK YOU



WRITE TO US:

Inspire@NextGenLearners.com – suggest a future book topic. Tell us what story a child in your life is waiting for.

Press@NextGenLearners.com – for authors and creators who'd like to publish their own books with NGL.

Info@NextGenLearners.com – general questions about other collections, products, or the NextGen Learners ecosystem.

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 – write directly to the author. Maisel reads every message.

STAY CONNECTED

Visit the Learning Realm at 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 Benny. For sitting beside a child while they learned that their quiet, faithful brainstem has been working for them 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 Benny 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*