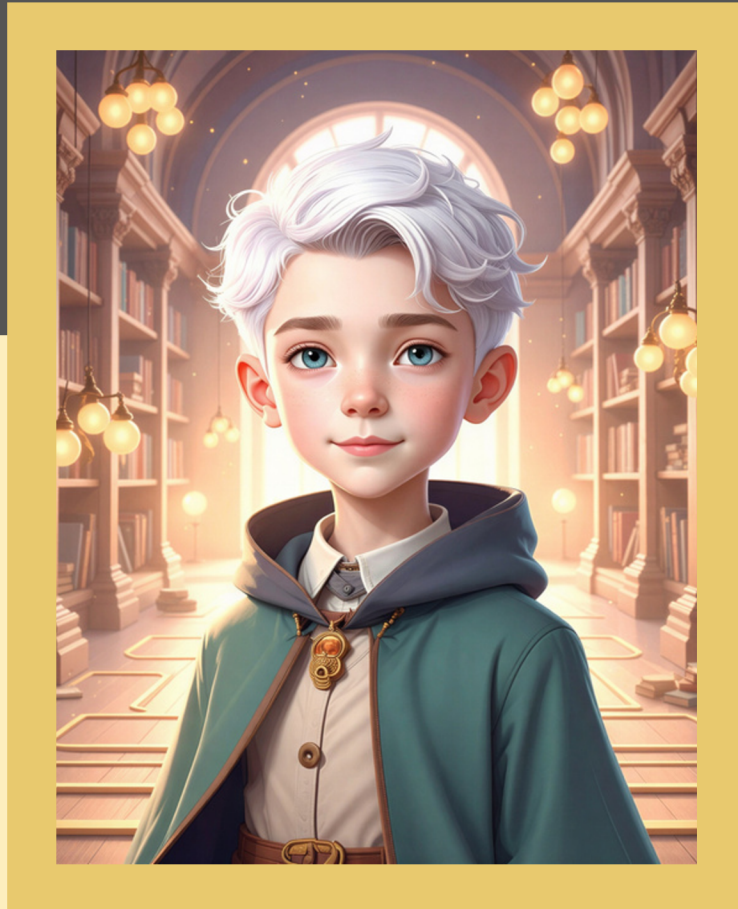


NG **NEXTGEN**
LEARNERS

Presents:



Hippocampus Hal and the Memory Maze

Long-Term Memory, learning & remembering

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.

Hippocampus Hal 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 ask a child to remember clearly when the amygdala is still sounding the alarm. 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.

Hal's place on the pathway. Hal sits in the middle of the arc because memory is the bridge between what happened and who we become. Hippocampus Hal cannot do his careful sorting until Benny's brainstem feels safe and Amy's alarm has quieted — memory consolidation requires a regulated body and a trusting heart first. Once a child has met the layers below, Hal can take what was survived, what was felt, and begin filing it into a story a child can carry without being crushed by. That's why Hal often shows up after a hard thing — once the storm has passed, the keeper gets to work.

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 **Hal** 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 Hal

Hippocampus Hal is the memory keeper of the Brainy Bunch. He lives in the hippocampus – the seahorse-shaped part of the brain, tucked deep in the middle, that stores what happened, where it happened, and how it felt. Every birthday, every scraped knee, every favorite song, every face a child learns to recognize passes through Hal’s careful sorting.

Hal’s personality is thoughtful and curious. He has silver-white wavy hair and bright blue eyes, and he carries a notebook everywhere. He asks questions before he files anything away. He doesn’t rush. He’s the book every child who can’t find a word, who forgets the instructions, who relives the same memory over and over, or who loves to tell the same story again and again needs to meet – because he shows them their memory is not broken. It’s a maze worth wandering.

HAL'S



READ-ALLOUD GUIDE

Before reading: Ask the child, “What is the very first thing you remember?” Listen without correcting. Say, “That memory lives in a special place called the hippocampus. Meet the keeper.”

During reading: Pause when Hal gets lost in the maze. Ask: Does your memory ever feel like a maze? What helps you find your way?

After reading: “Hal is filing away this story right now. You’ll remember parts of it tomorrow, parts of it next year, and parts of it maybe forever.” Then a slow breath together.



Hal's Quote of the Day

What you forget doesn't mean it's gone. What you remember doesn't mean it's yours to carry alone.



Hal's Promise

Every child who meets Hal gets the same gift: the knowledge that their memory is not broken, their forgetting is not a failure, and somewhere inside them, a thoughtful, curious keeper has never once stopped sorting the good stuff from the heavy stuff.

They were never alone in the maze.

Hal's Memory Maze

Color in the maze where Hal does his quiet sorting.



What memory wanders through the maze today?

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 Hal. For sitting beside a child while they learned that their thoughtful, curious hippocampus has been holding onto the good stuff 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 Hal 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