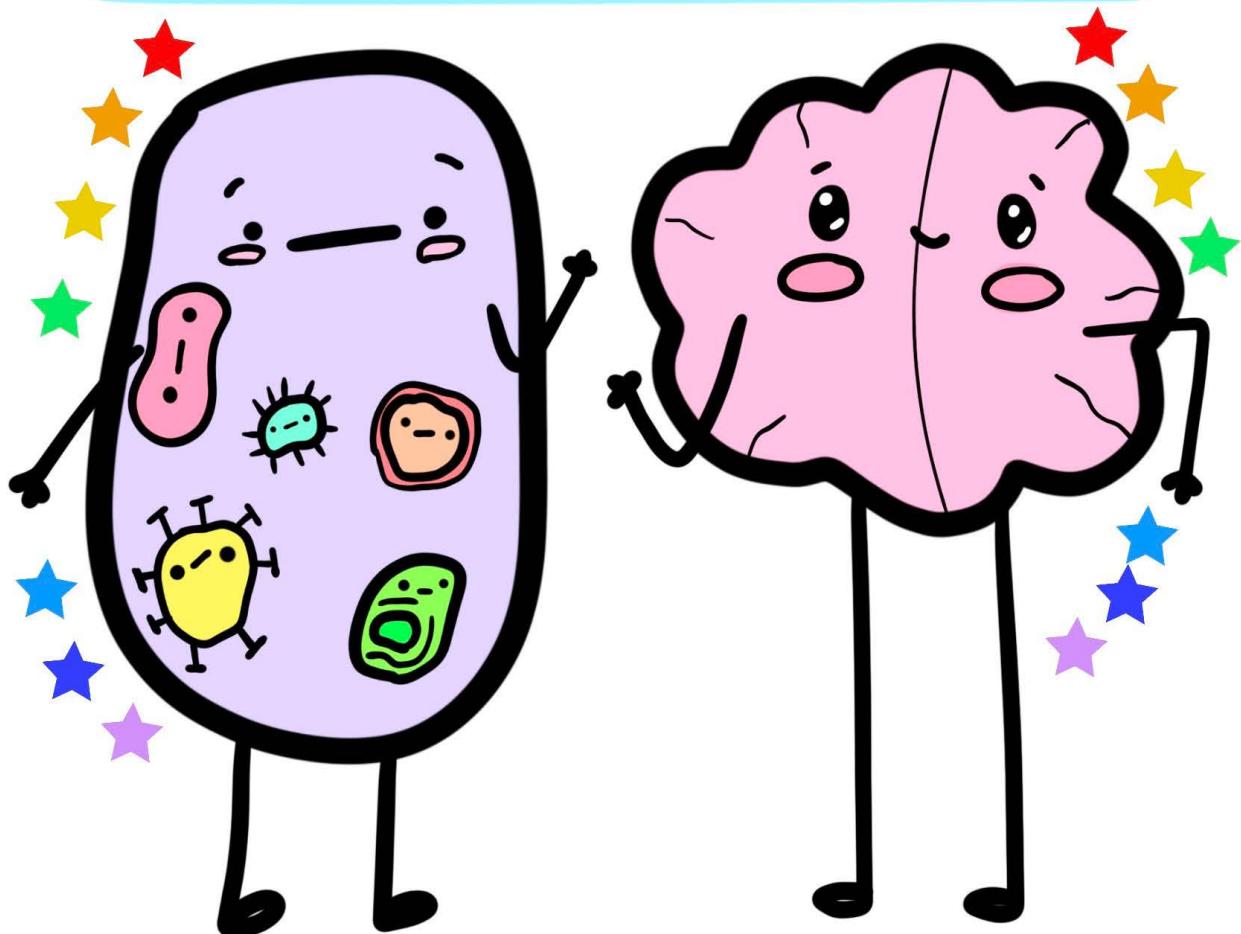


coloring cancer:

A COLORFUL WAY TO
Understand Brain Tumors



How to Use this Coloring Book with your Children:

If you are reading this, you or someone you care about has a brain tumor.

Whether this is all new, or something you've been navigating for awhile, you probably know some of the unique symptoms and side effects can be worrisome and spark difficult questions and conversations. You may not know exactly how to answer children's questions or explain the nuances of a brain tumor, but we hope that the creation of this coloring book will help you navigate these conversations.

We know kids benefit from illustrations that mirror their experience, teach them new information, and validate their feelings. You'll find several coloring pages in this book that may represent an experience you are facing. Not every page will reflect your experience, so we encourage you to use these pages as a springboard for discussions that reflect your unique situation.

Kids of all ages can benefit from these coloring pages. Even very young children will be able to pick up on new words being spoken in your home and see pictures that help them grasp key concepts and feelings. And who doesn't enjoy coloring? It's a calm, meditative, and creative activity that kids can do independently, with a sibling, or with an adult. You are never too old to color! Stick your favorite coloring pages up on the fridge—have some fun with it!

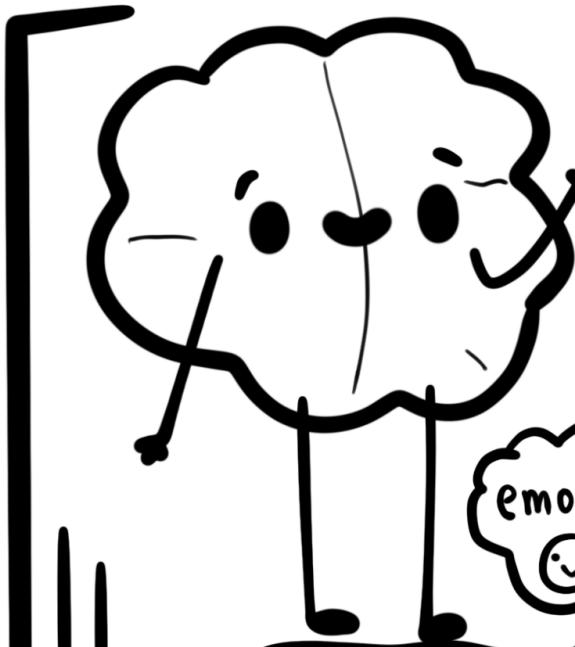
The neat thing about coloring pages is that they can be used as discussion starters. Depending on the age of your children, consider asking questions to go deeper. Here are some ideas:

- Which coloring page is your favorite? Why?
- What similarities do you see between the coloring pages and the person with a brain tumor? What is different?
- The human body is so interesting! What is something new you learned from these pages?
- What else are you curious about? Do you have any questions?
- What is something we can do to help the person with a brain tumor?
- How did these coloring pages make you feel?
- Who can you go to when you have big feelings? What makes you feel better when you are having a tough time?

It is helpful to tell children they can ask questions, voice concerns, and tell you and other trusted adults about their feelings at any time. We've also included some tips for talking to children and answering their more challenging questions. Remember that every child is different and there are many valuable ways to approach these conversations. **You know your kids the best. Trust your gut and reach out for support and resources as you need them.**

NOTE: While the content of this book was written for those with a primary brain tumor, some of the content may also be relevant to those who have cancer that has metastasized to the brain. We encourage families to tailor this information to their unique family circumstances.

Hi - I'm
your **BRAIN!** I am like the
BOSS of the body.



I control things
like ~

emotions

MOVEMENT

heartbeat

memory

speech

vision

bodily functions such as
breathing

Frontal lobe

thinks,
makes
decisions,
helps
regulate
emotions

temporal lobe

helps us
understand
language
responsible for
memory and feelings.
helps us with reading

brain stem

controls basic
bodily functions
such as breathing,
sleeping, and
swallowing

Parietal lobe

controls touch
and movement.
Responsible for
visual and spacial
perception

occipital lobe

controls
vision

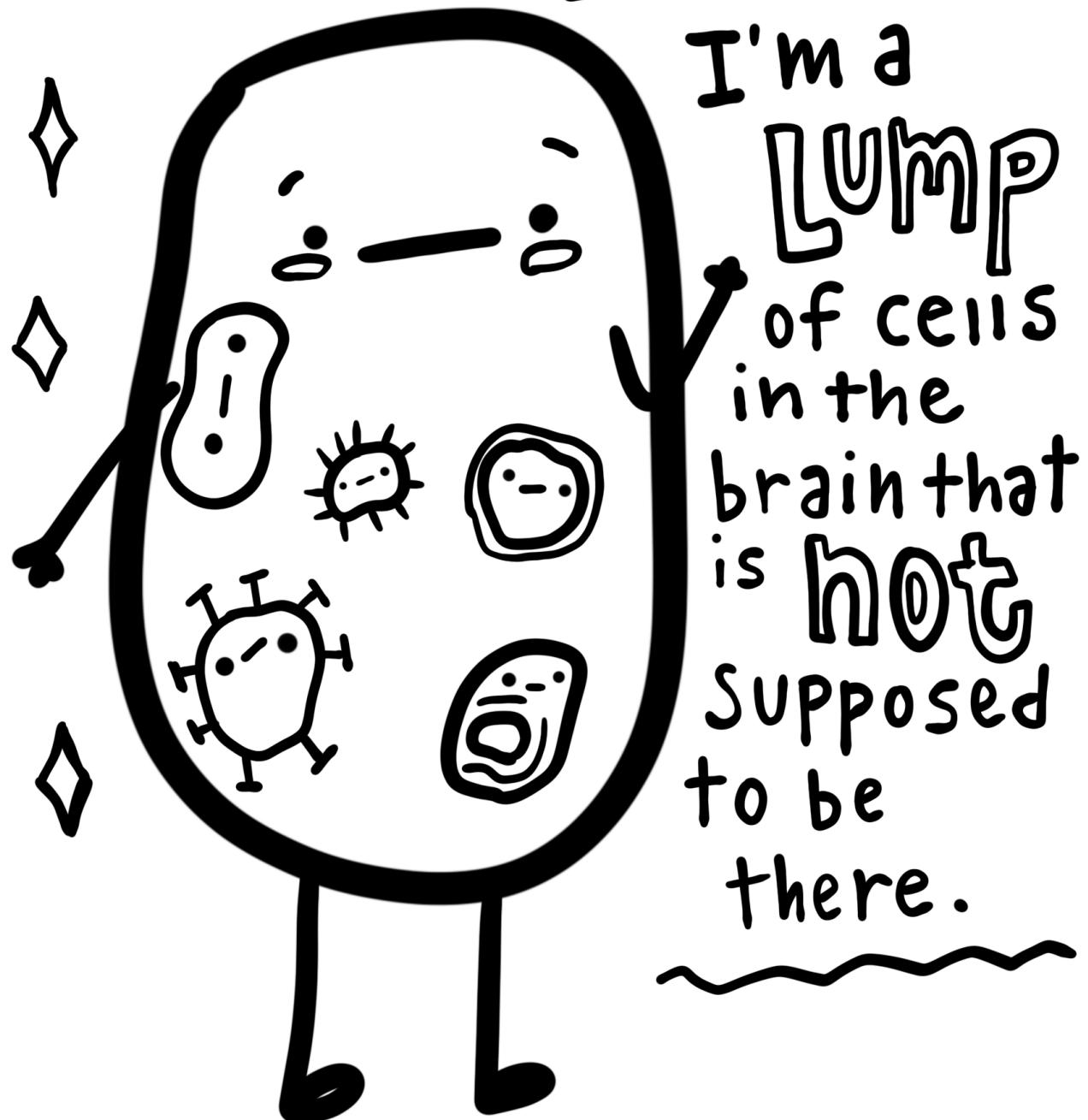
cerebellum

coordinates
balance and
voluntary
movements

PARTS OF THE BRAIN (and what they do)



Hi - I'm a Brain Tumor!



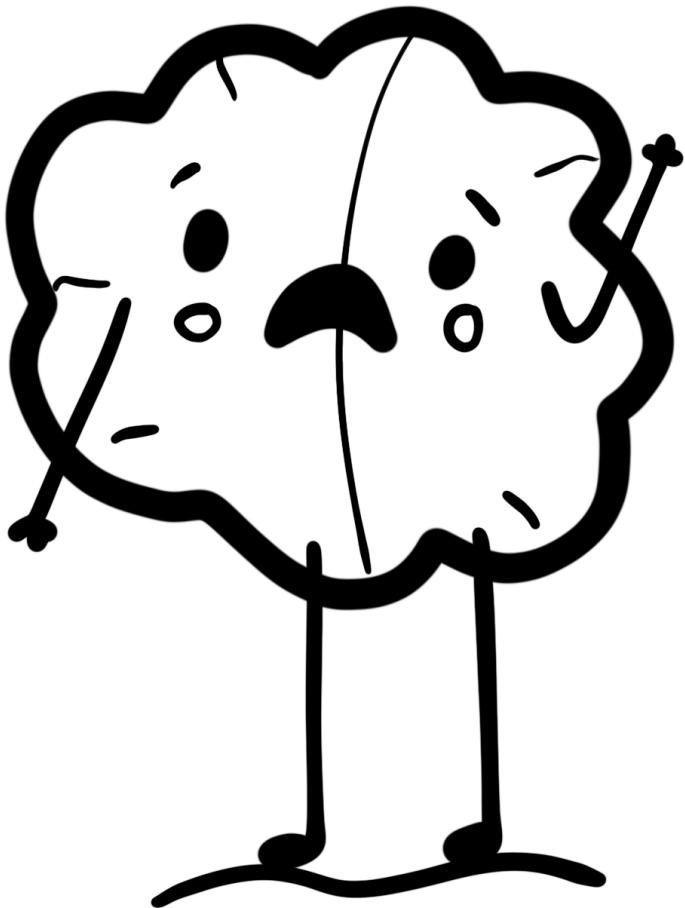
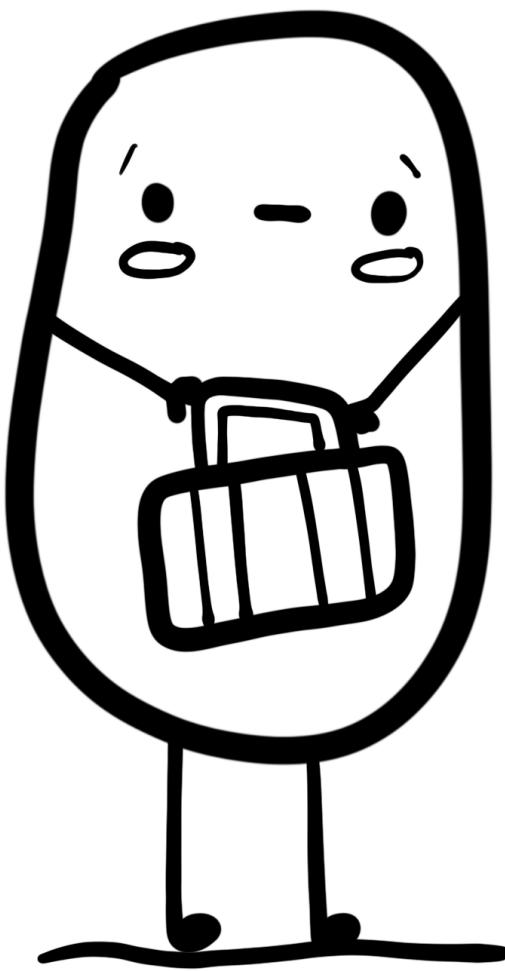


I'M
HERE TO
MOVE
IN...

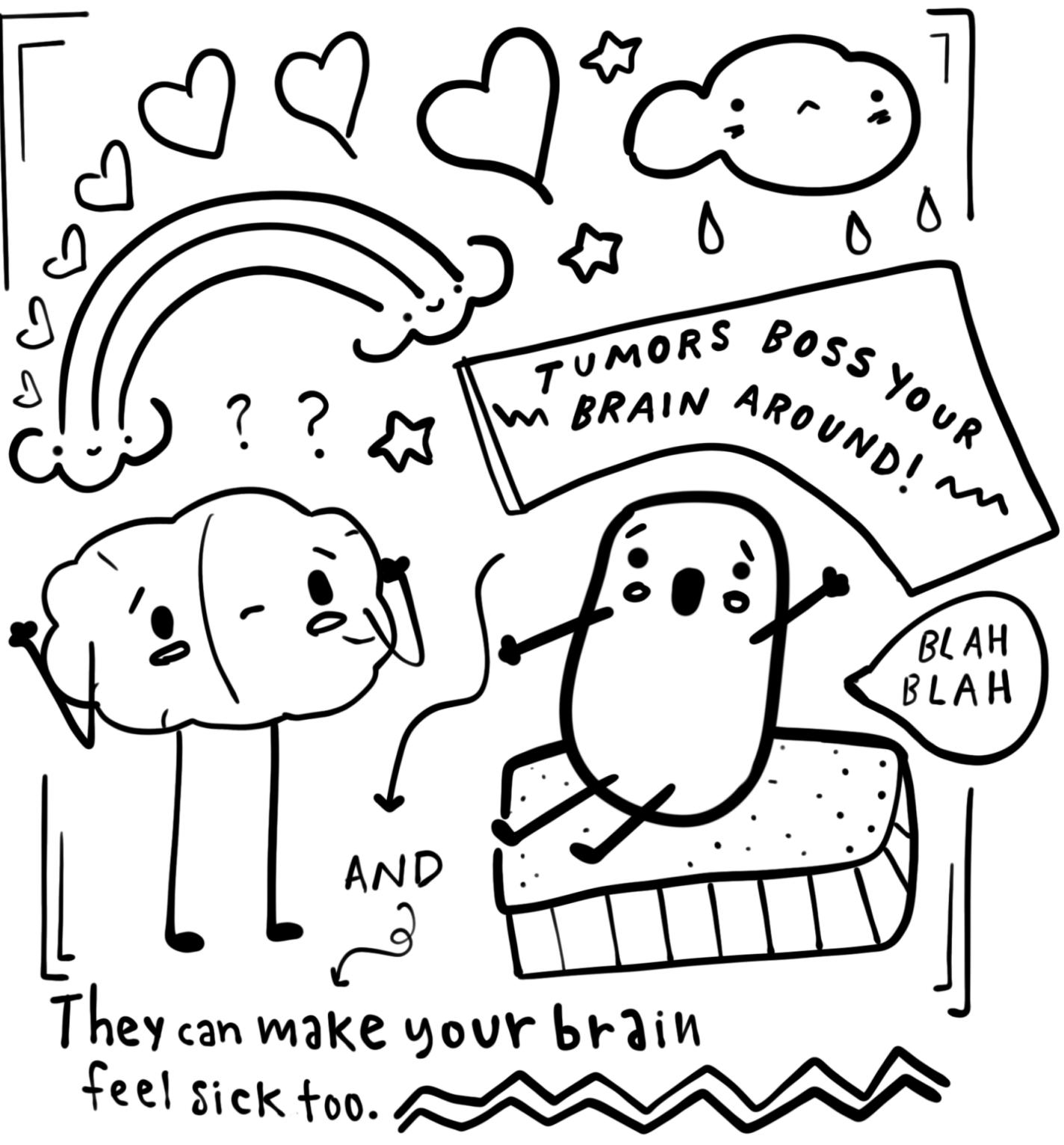


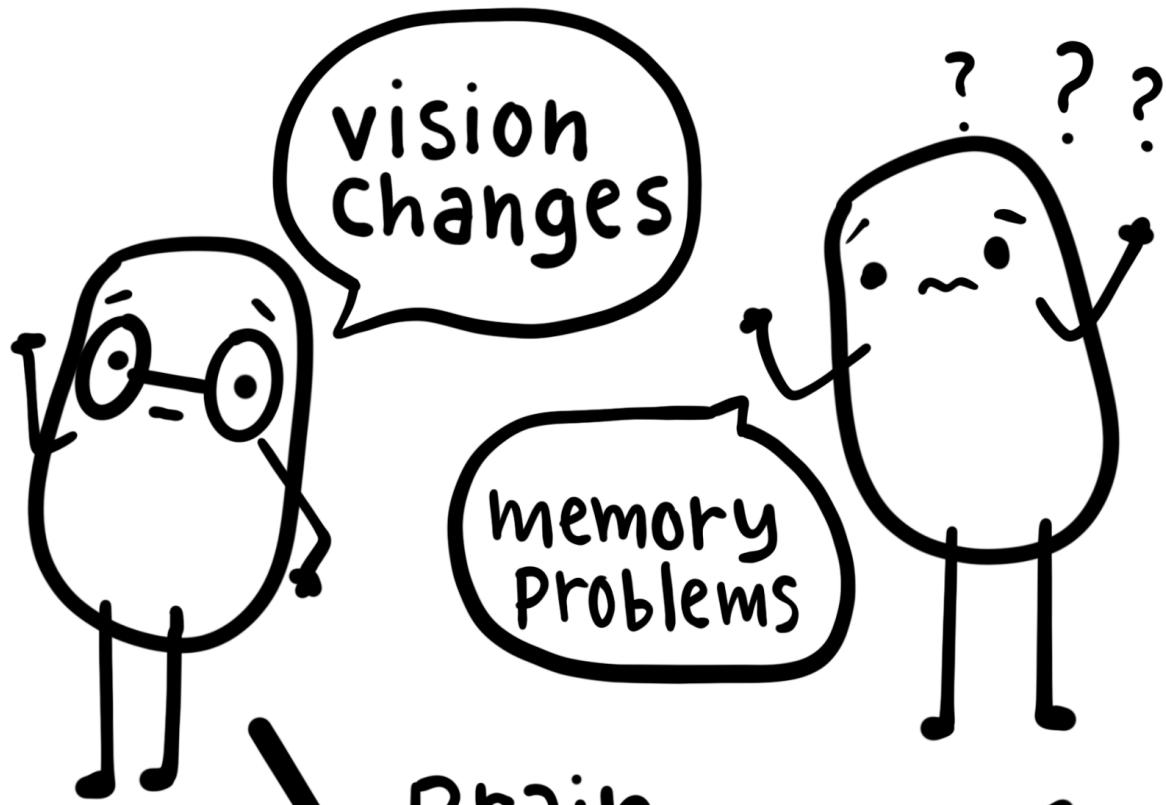
NO THANKS

! ?

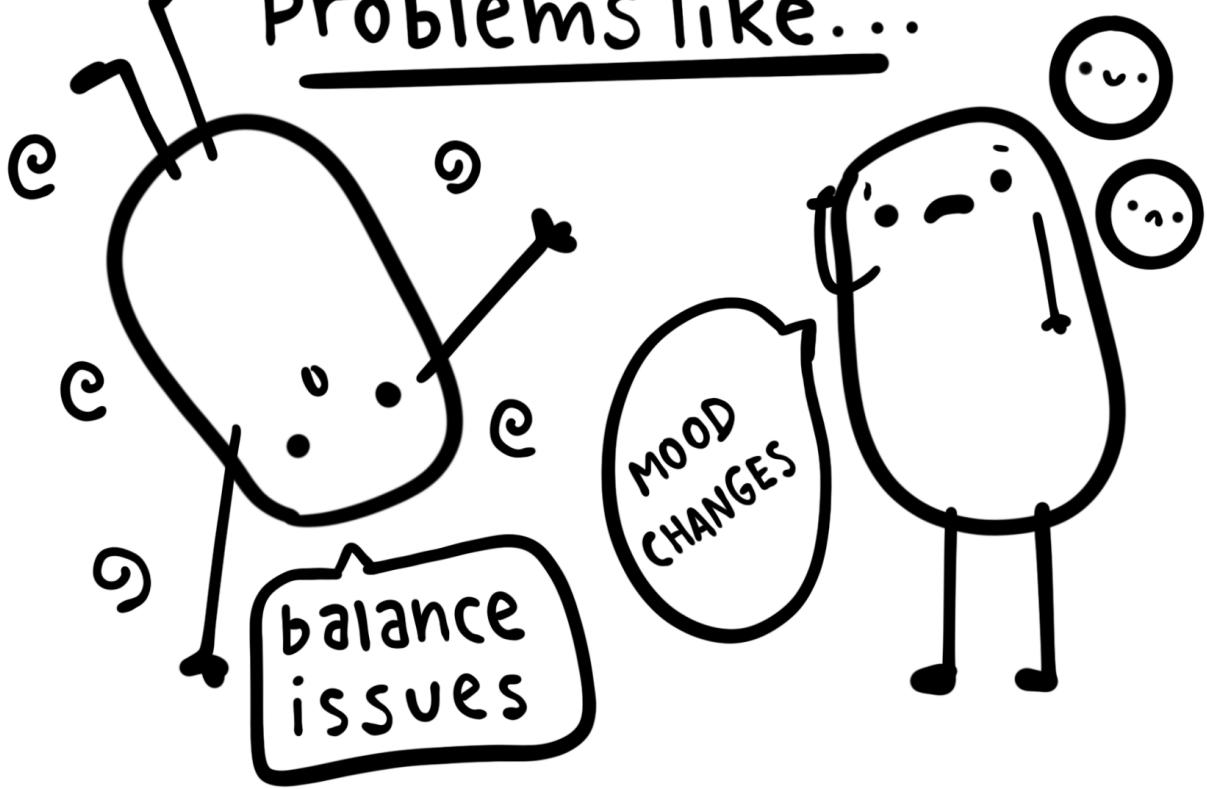


When brain tumors
move in they can
cause many problems.

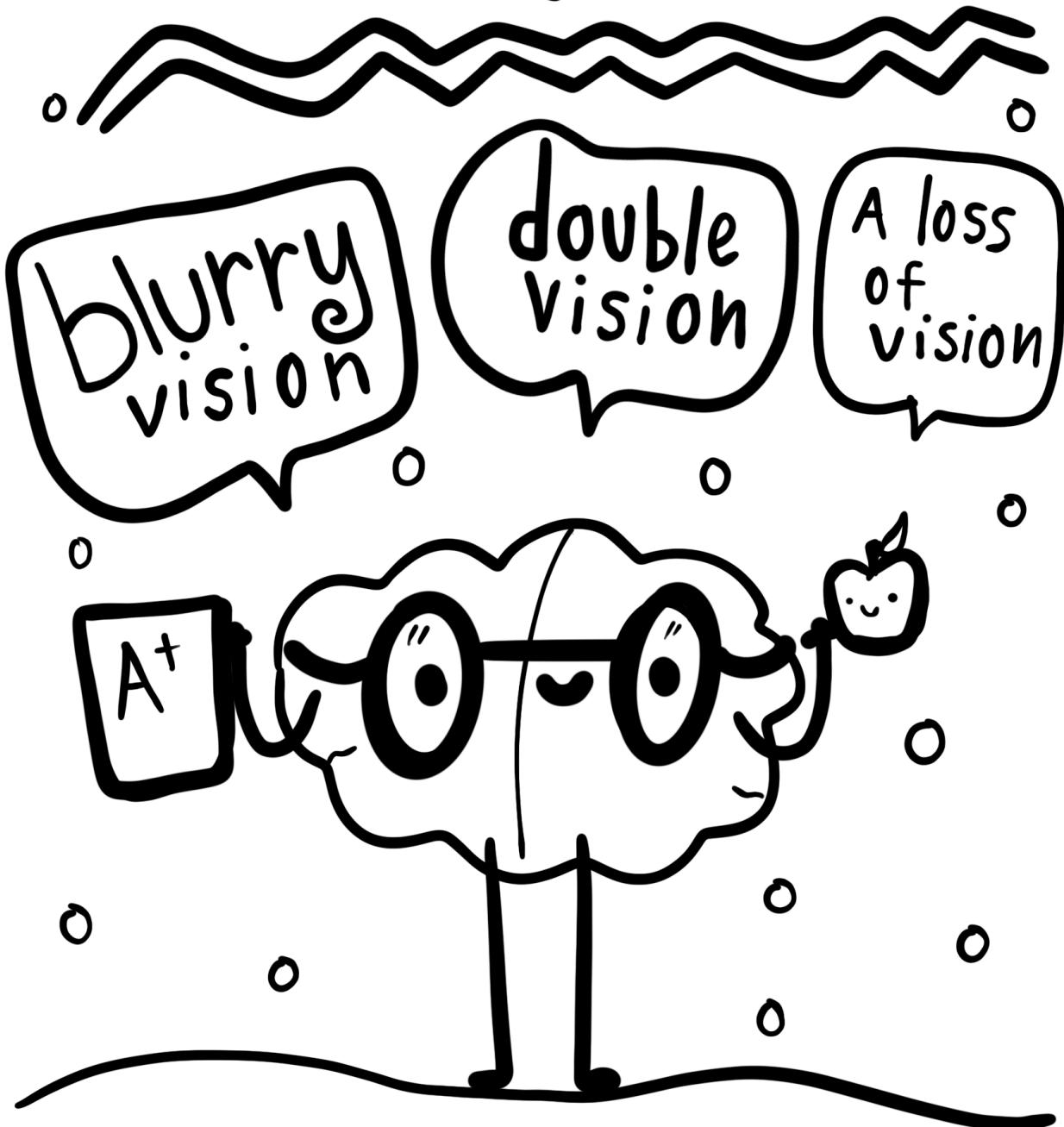


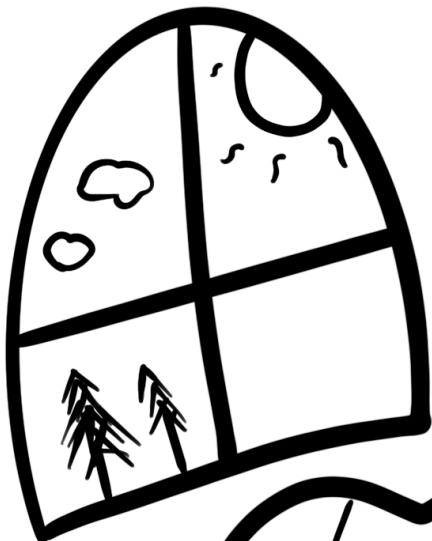


Brain
tumors cause
problems like...

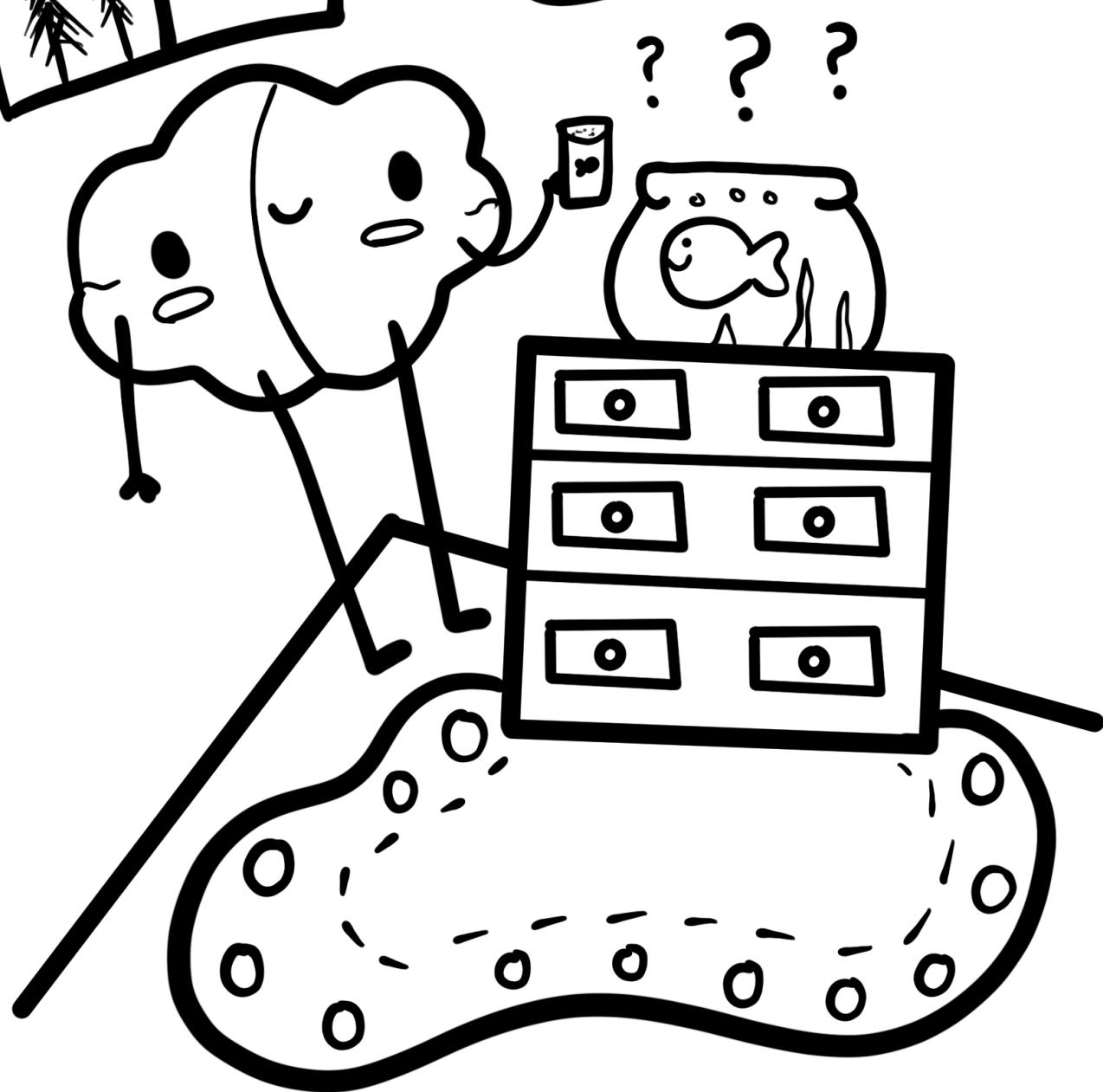


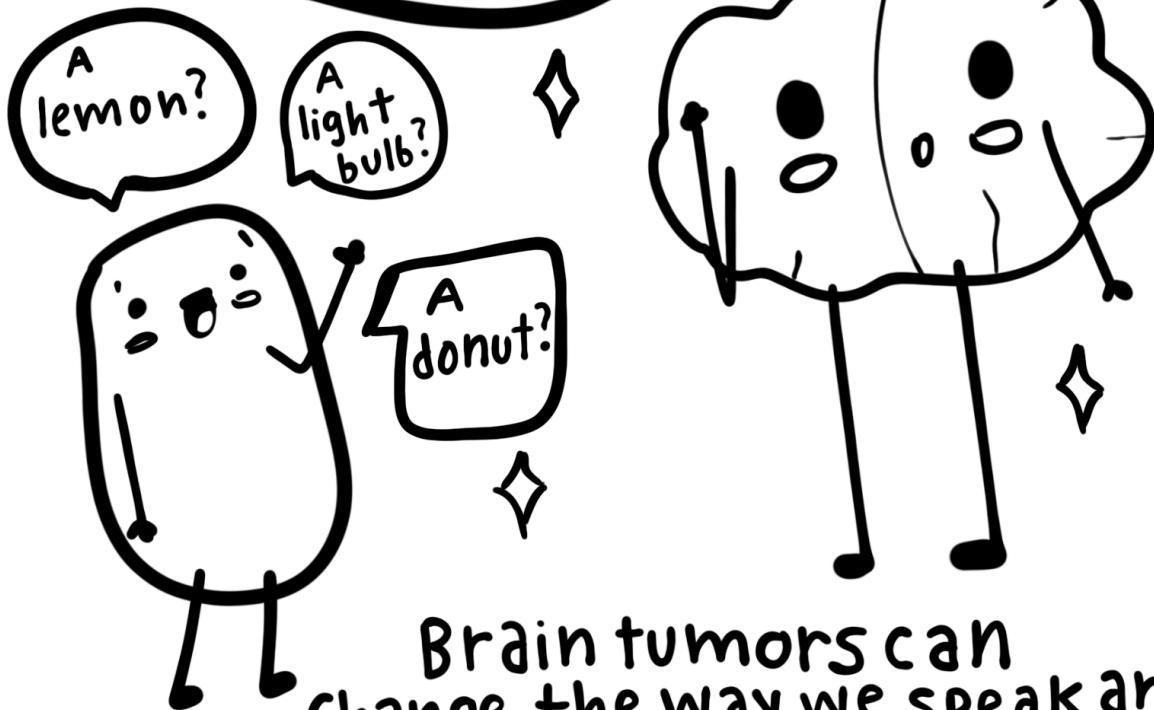
Brain tumors can Change the way we see. They can cause:





My goldfish can
be forgetful. Brain
tumors can make
me forgetful too.





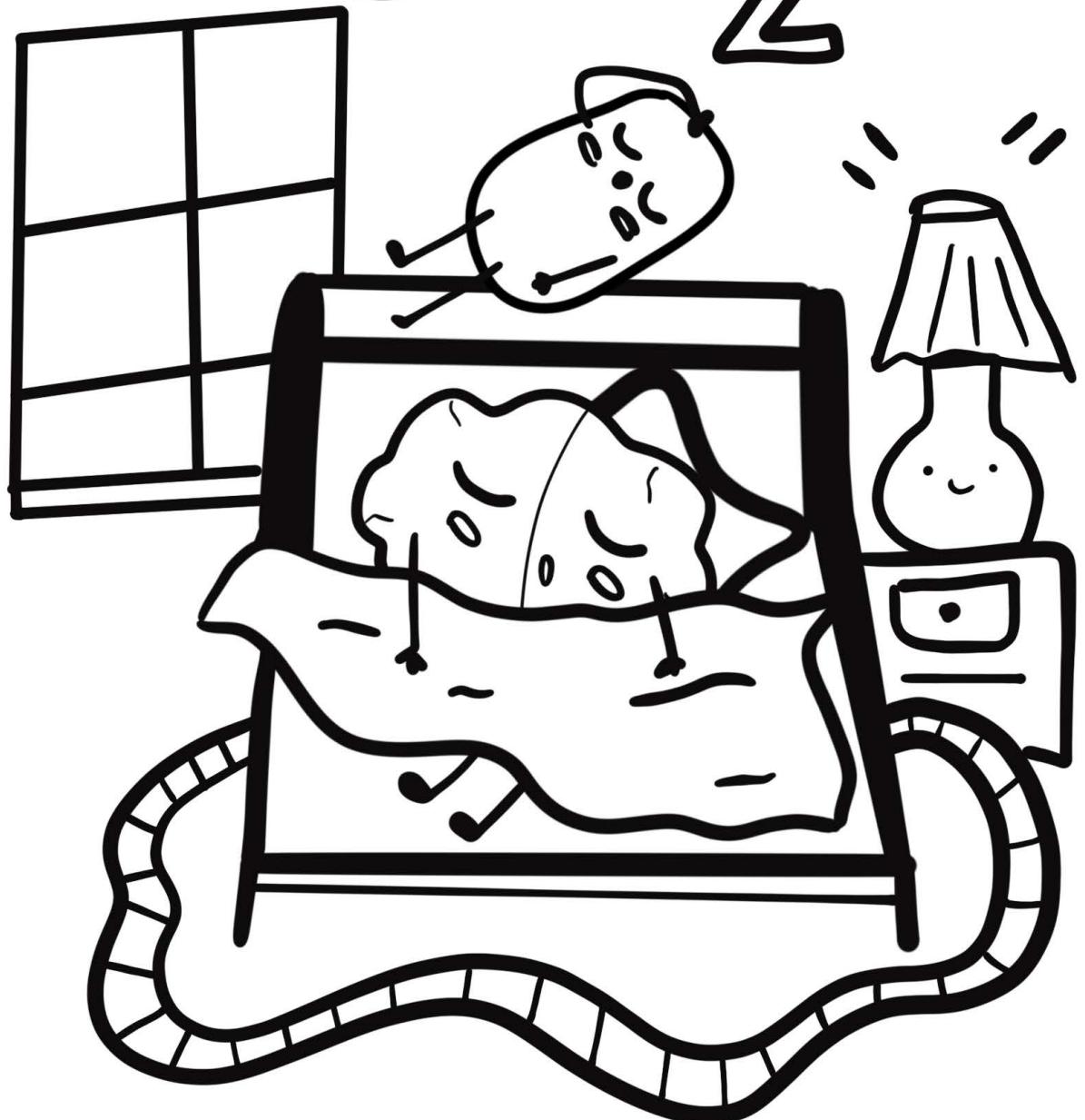
Brain tumors can
change the way we speak and
understand language.

SEIZURES.
are sudden bursts of
ELECTRICAL
activity in the brain.



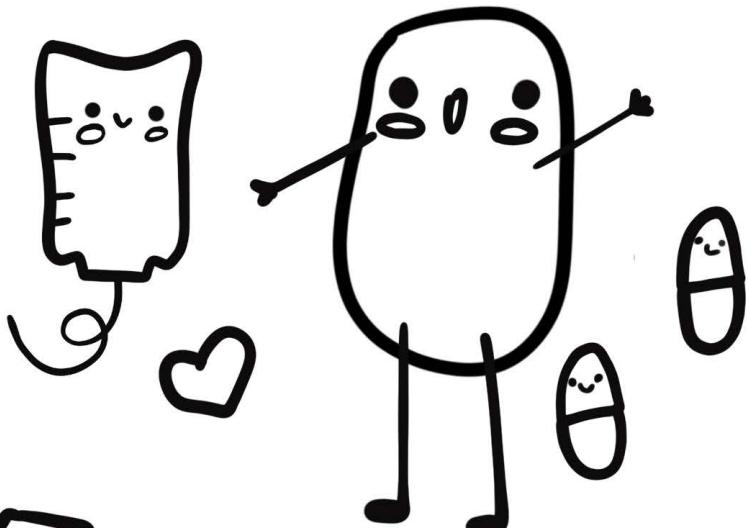
They are a common
Symptom of brain tumors.

Brain tumors
can cause you to
feel very tired.

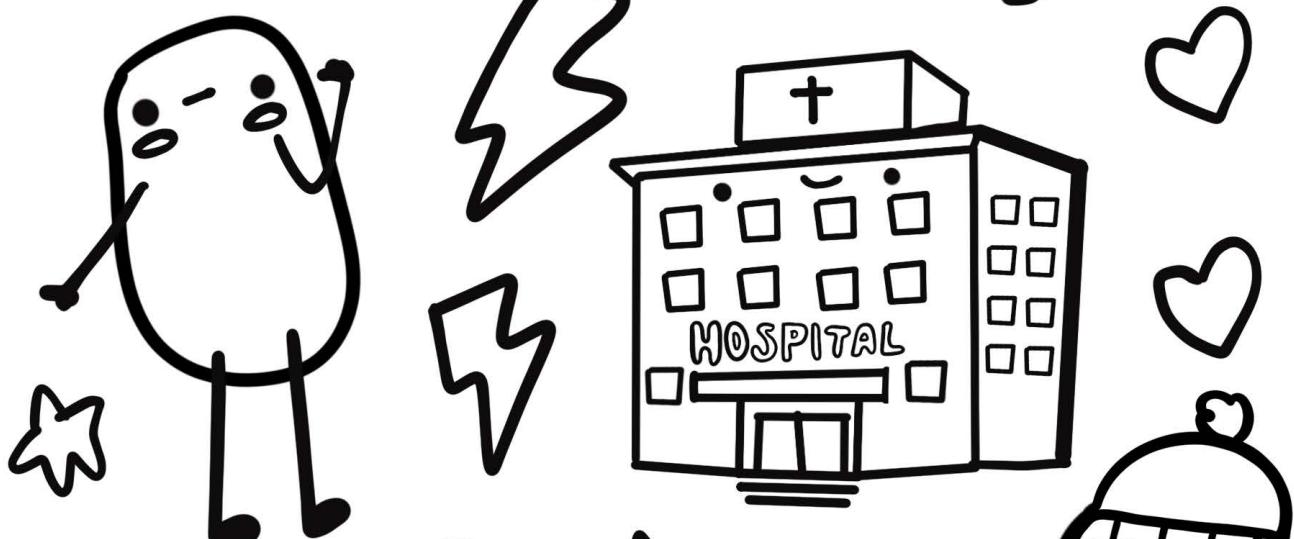


There are
different ways
to treat brain
tumors.

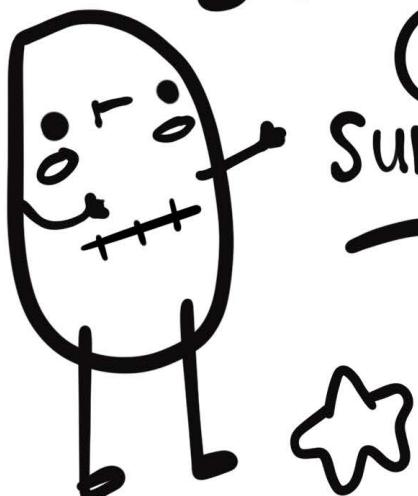
① chemotherapy



② radiation



③ Surgery



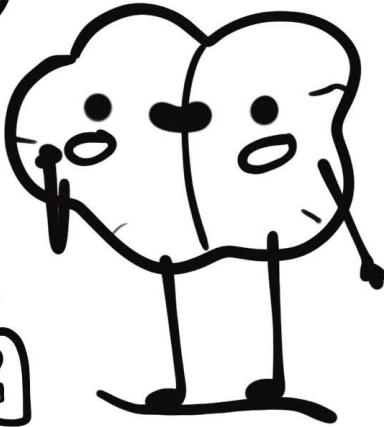
④ Tumor
Treating
Fields





have
Patience

ways you
can help
someOne
who has a
brain tumor



Show
them
you
care



♡ No matter what changes,
One thing is constant ~~~
my LOVE for you! ♡

General Tips for Supporting Children who have a Parent or Loved One with a Brain Tumor:

SHARING THE NEWS:

- **Be open and honest.** You don't need to tell your kids every little detail of your diagnosis or treatment, but the information you choose to share should be accurate. You want your kids to trust you and know they can come to you with their questions and feelings.
- **It is okay to display emotions while talking with kids—some tears validate their own feelings.** But maintaining a sense of composure helps kids to feel soothed.
- **Keep initial conversations simple.** It can be helpful to start from your children's point of view by addressing what they have already noticed (for example, noticing that the person with the tumor has been more tired, or making frequent trips to the clinic). Use easy-to-understand language and short sentences. Expand as your children have more questions. Use words your child will overhear and explain them as best as you can. Use children's books to describe complex concepts like chemotherapy or radiation.
- **Follow their lead.** Children typically process new information in small bursts, often followed by play or time alone. Give them time to process the new information and see if they come back with additional questions. If not, check-in with them and ask if they have any questions or need additional explanations. Remind your kids that it is safe to ask questions about anything, as they may perceive certain topics as taboo or off-limits. When parents are open, children are more likely to perceive news as non-threatening and feel safe asking their questions.
- **Consider having heavier or “big” conversations while you and your children are on a walk, in a car, or engaging in an activity.** It can be helpful to have these conversations when your children don't have to maintain eye contact and may feel more comfortable managing strong feelings and questions.
- **It is very important that you tell kids that they did not cause the brain tumor and they cannot “catch” the brain tumor.** Help them to understand that cancer is NOT contagious. You may need to revisit these concepts frequently for young children.



PREPARING FOR CHANGES:

- **Let children know about upcoming changes that will impact them.** This will help to ease distress and reinforce that they can trust you'll keep them informed. Kids tend to think about how their lives will be affected, so discuss any changes to their daily routine or caregivers.
- **Give kids a heads-up if you know the person with a brain tumor will lose their hair, have a scar, or experience other physical changes.** Let them know if the person with a brain tumor will need adaptive equipment like a cane or a tumor treating field device. Knowing what to expect will give them an opportunity to ask questions and begin to process the news.
- **Use visual calendars so children know what to expect each day.** Young children will do best with simple, one-week (or daily) calendars, while older children may appreciate more detailed monthly calendars.
- **Brain tumors and the treatment can cause personality and mood changes.** This can be alarming for children, and they may blame themselves for the new behavior or family dynamics. Remind children that they are not the cause of these changes. It is important to acknowledge emotional and behavioral changes and talk about them openly. Sometimes, just giving some space to your loved one who is experiencing these changes can ease tension and frustration.

TALKING ABOUT DEATH:

- **It is common and normal for kids to ask if the person with the brain tumor will die.** Answer their questions as honestly as you can, with the information you have. If the prognosis is ambiguous, it may be helpful to focus on what you DO know. For instance: "Mom is going to the doctor to get medicine/treatment and the medical team is doing everything they can to help her feel better." It is okay to say, "I do not know the answer to that question. I will try and find out."
- **Young children have a difficult time thinking in future tense, so talk about the here and now.** Older children may be able to use common markers, like holidays, to mark possible changes: "Dad will likely be alive for your birthday, but he may not be here when you start 3rd grade."
- **Children ask more questions about death when they notice significant changes in their loved one.** Changes may include noticeable weight loss, speech and memory changes, more time in bed, or inability to engage in activities. Explain to children that, even though changes are happening, they will still be loved and taken care of. This is typically the time to start having more conversations about end-of-life. Some kids will want to know a lot about what is happening, and others may withdraw. If children withdraw, let them know it is okay and that they can talk when they are ready. Allow kids to feel whatever they feel and keep showing up for them—ask them how they are doing, give them a hug, or just sit with them. Sometimes they just need the physical presence of someone who is safe and loving.
- **If your children are curious about what happens when someone dies, you can read them children's books about the life cycle, death and grief.** Share your family's beliefs about what you think happens when someone dies.

MAKING SPECIAL MEMORIES:

- **If you or your loved one has limitations due to the brain tumor, treatments, or side effects, you may be concerned about how to engage with kids and have fun.** Keep in mind that kids don't need extravagant trips or events to feel special. Children cherish the simple activities at home when they feel connected to the ones they love.
- **Find ways to adjust favorite family activities to make them manageable.** Try movies at home, camping in the living room, dance parties on the bed, or playing chef in the kitchen. Consider getting assistance from friends and family who can help gather supplies, set-up, supervise, and clean-up after activities so you can focus on the quality time spent with your children.
- **Get creative from a horizontal position!** There are ways to play with kids even when someone is lying in bed or on the couch. Snuggle up to play "I Spy" or "Would you Rather...", tell stories and jokes, task your kid with a scavenger hunt, or invite them to put on a dance/magic/comedy/puppet show for you. They will love your attention and laughter.
- **Consider creating a legacy project.** Legacy projects can bring families together to create tangible gifts for our loved ones when we can no longer physically be there. Try creating simple videos, voice memos, cards, poems, letters, emails, or recipes. Check out Bright Spot Network's list of legacy projects for more ideas.

HELPING CHILDREN TO UNDERSTAND BRAIN TUMOR RESOURCES:

American Brain Tumor Association

- [Talking with your Children about a Brain Tumor Diagnosis](#) (downloadable pdf)

The Brain Tumour Charity

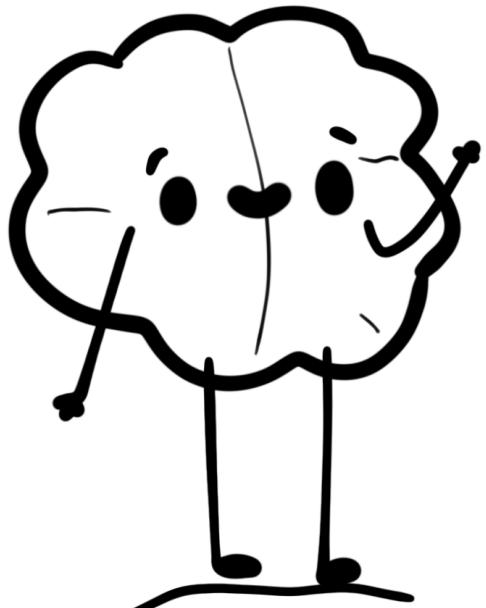
- [Talking with your Children about a Brain Tumor](#) (webpage)
- [Animations to help explain brain tumors](#) (video)
- [About Brain Tumors | Jake Animations for Children](#) (video)
- [Talking with your Children about your Brain Tumor Diagnosis](#) (video)

Brain Tumor Network

- [Various Resources](#)
- [Navigation Services](#)

Bright Spot Network

- [Tips and resources on how to parent through a brain tumor](#)



This guide is brought to you in partnership with Bright Spot Network and Brain Tumor Network. All illustrations were created by Chelsey Gomez (@ohyouresotough) author, artist and cancer community advocate.

Thank you to all of the professionals who wrote and reviewed the text:

Carissa Hodgson, LCSW, OSW-C
Director of Programs and Community Outreach at Bright Spot Network

Alexandra Berkovits, MSW, LCSW, OSW-C
Neuro-Oncology Social Work Navigator at Brain Tumor Network

Sarah Hindle, MSW, LCSW
Neuro-Oncology Social Work Navigator at Brain Tumor Network

Madison Fogarty, MSW, LCSW
Neuro-Oncology Social Work Navigator at Brain Tumor Network

Molly Geare, MS, RN
Neuro-Oncology Nurse Navigator at Brain Tumor Network

Beth Armstrong, BSN, RN, OCN
Neuro-Oncology Nurse Navigator at Brain Tumor Network

Abigail Levinson Marks, PhD
Milton Marks Neuro-Oncology Family Camp

