

How to

TRAIN



YOUR

AMIGO



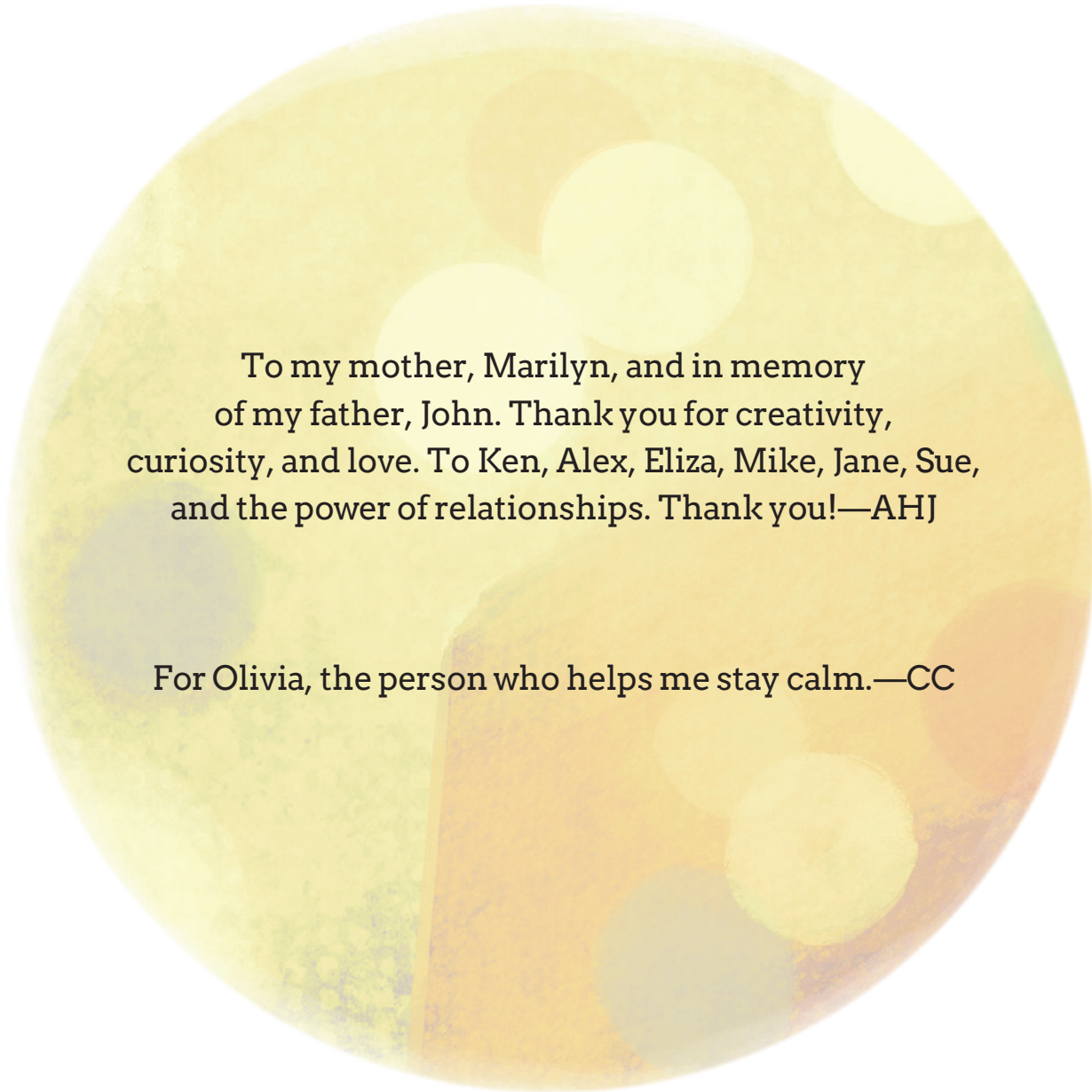
Anna Housley Juster • illustrated by Cynthia Cliff

How to  
**TRAIN  
YOUR  
AMYGDALA**

Anna Housley Juster    illustrated by Cynthia Cliff

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To my mother, Marilyn, and in memory  
of my father, John. Thank you for creativity,  
curiosity, and love. To Ken, Alex, Eliza, Mike, Jane, Sue,  
and the power of relationships. Thank you!—AHJ

For Olivia, the person who helps me stay calm.—CC

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Hi there!  
It's great to see you.  
I am your amygdala.



Yeah, I know. It's a funny word. Let's say it together!

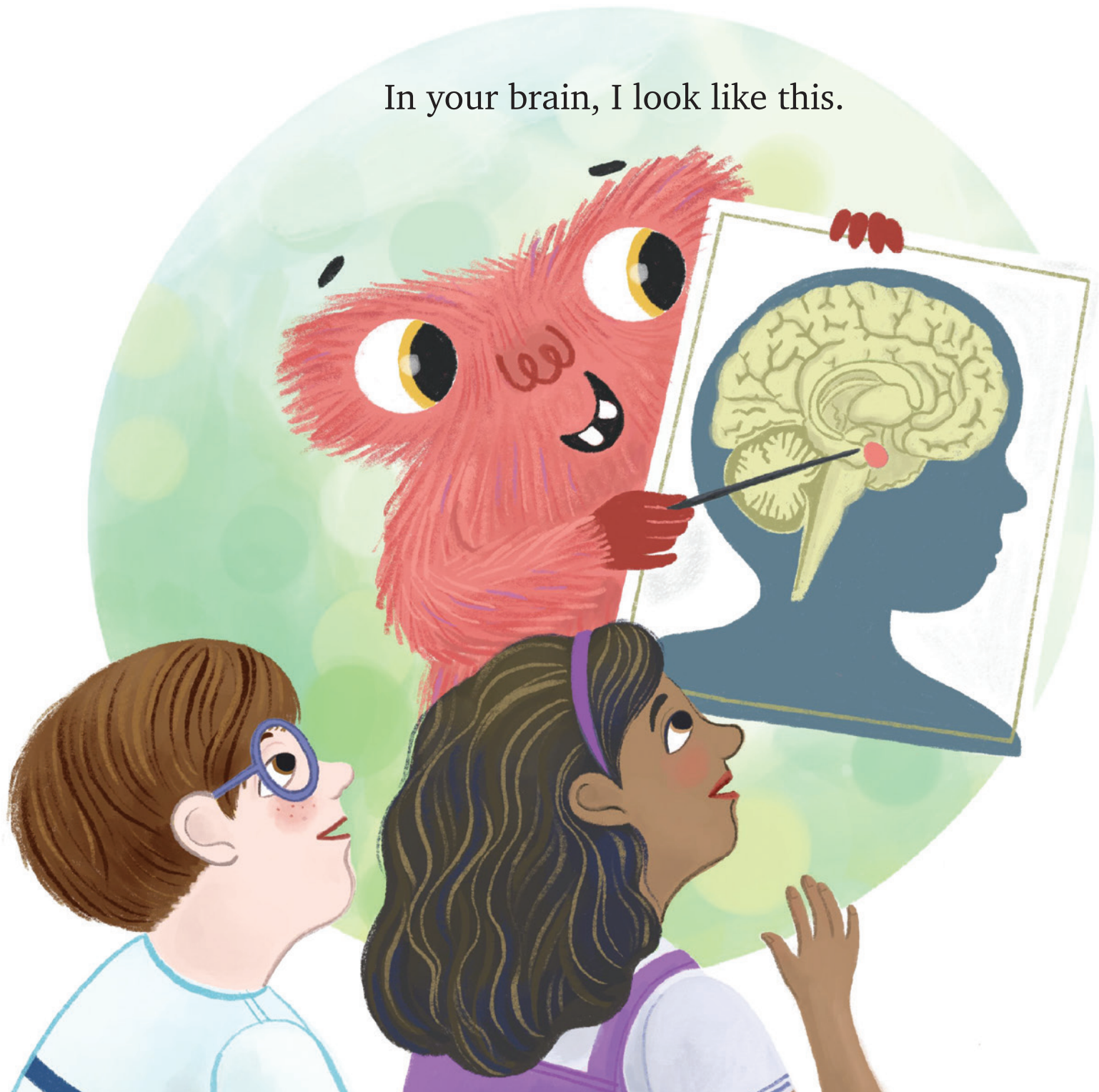


Yup, that's my cool name. It's unique, and I like it.



You have probably never seen me before, but I am right here in your brain. There is an amygdala in everyone's brain. It's true! All humans have one. Many other animals do too.

In your brain, I look like this.



But in this book, I look like this.



Not bad. Not bad at all. I am *pretty* cute.



# THE AMYGDALA TRAINING MANUAL FOR KIDS!

By Amygdala

**Hi!** Remember me, your amygdala?

Thanks so much for helping me! Training me takes a lot of practice, so let's keep working together. By reading this far, you've already learned some important tips. I wrote this manual to share even more.

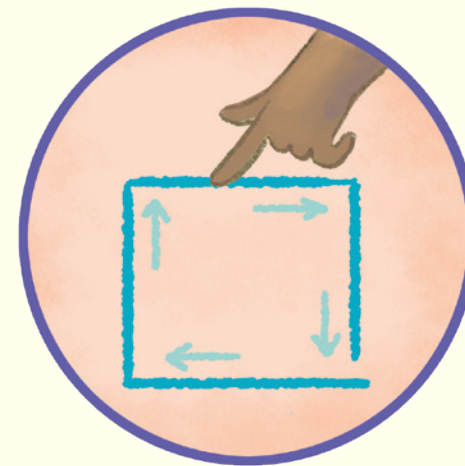
One of the very best ways to train me is by doing something you do every day: breathing.

It can be easy to forget that you breathe because your body breathes automatically. But when your amygdala (that's me!) or other parts of your brain get stressed, your breathing can become very fast and shallow. You might even hold your breath without realizing it. By paying attention to your breath and slowing it down on purpose, you can help me stay calm. Here are three tips for training me using your amazing ability to breathe.

## Tip #1: Find Your Favorite Breath

There are lots of ways to breathe. Here are a few you can try.

- **Lazy 8 Breathing:** Use one finger to slowly draw a figure 8 on your other hand, or imagine the shape of an 8. Breathe in slowly up the curves of the 8 and breathe out as the shape curves down. Then switch hands. Do this until you notice your muscles relax and you feel calmer.



- **Square Breathing:** To try square breathing, you can either breathe as you draw a square in the air with your finger or imagine a square as you breathe. Breathe in as you go up one side of the square, breathe out across the top, breathe in as you go down the other side, and breathe out across the bottom. If you want, you can count to four or five as you breathe along each side. Keep doing this until your body feels calm.

- **Dragon Breathing:** Sometimes you might need to let out a lot of anger or frustration before you can breathe calmly. When you feel this way, try taking a deep breath to fill your lungs. Then blow out all the air as hard as you can, like you are blowing out fire! Now try slow, calm breathing until you feel your muscles relax.



## Tip #2: Breathe This Way Every Day

Choose one or more ways to breathe and practice *at least three times a day*—every day. Practice even when you are not worried or angry. You can focus on your breathing when you're waking up, walking outside, riding the bus, sitting at school, taking a bath or shower, or falling asleep.



## Tip #3: Give Your Amygdala a Hug

As you practice your slow, deep breathing, imagine that you could give your amygdala a big hug. Take a long, deep breath and picture me in your brain. Imagine me relaxing as you breathe in and out.

