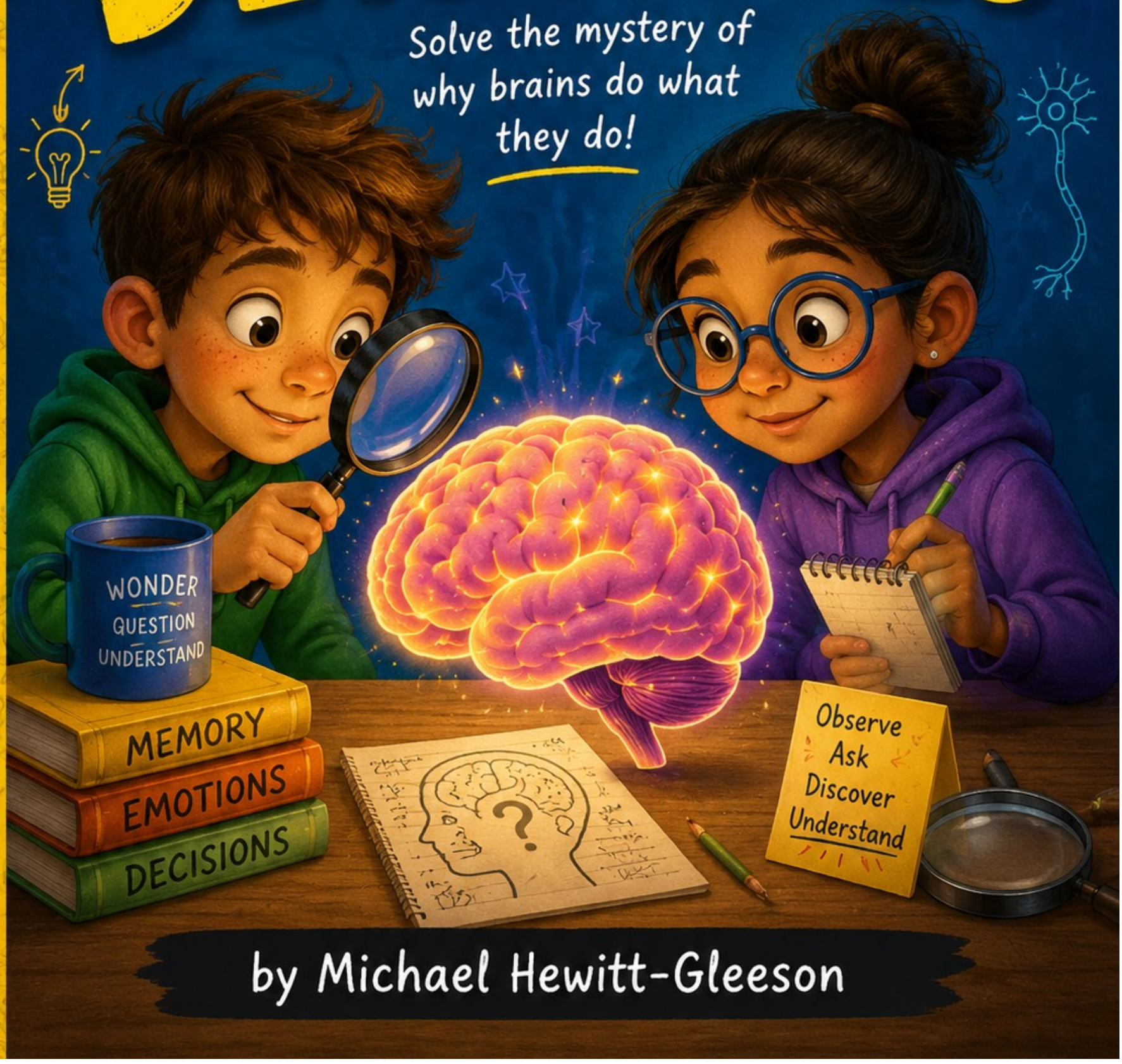
BRAIN DETECTIVES

Solve the mystery of why brains do what they do!



by Michael Hewitt-Gleeson

A real science fastbook for 10-year-olds and their friends.

When something strange happens, you can become a **Brain Detective** and ask detective questions like:

🧠 What was the brain trying to do? 🔎

🧠 What was the brain feeling? 🔎

🧠 What was the brain worried about? 🔎

🧠 What was the brain hoping for? 🔎

🧠 What can the brain learn for next time? 🔎

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The Brain Is Always Solving a Problem

Have you ever shouted at your brother or sister?

Or put off doing your homework?

Or felt nervous before speaking in front of the class?

Most adults would ask:

“Why did you do that?”

But a brain scientist might ask a different question:

“What problem was your brain trying to solve?”

That sounds strange, doesn’t it? After all, shouting at someone doesn’t seem like solving a problem. But your brain doesn’t always see things the same way you do.

Your brain is always trying to help you. Sometimes it helps in clever ways. Sometimes it helps in not-so-clever ways.

Imagine a child gets angry when another child laughs at them. The anger might be the brain's way of trying to protect them.

Another child might hide during a game because they feel nervous. Their brain might be trying to keep them safe.

Someone else might refuse to try something new because they are afraid of failing. Their brain might be trying to avoid embarrassment.

The brain is always asking questions like:

"Am I safe?"

"Do people like me?"

"Do I belong here?"

"Could something bad happen?"

Most of the time, your brain answers these questions before you even know it is thinking about them. That's because your brain is a bit like a super-fast computer. It notices faces, voices, sounds, feelings and memories. Then it quickly decides what to do next.

Sometimes your brain reacts because of something that happened a few seconds ago.

Maybe someone said something mean.

Maybe you felt left out.

Maybe you thought someone was laughing at you.

But sometimes the reason goes much further back.

Things that happened when you were younger can teach your brain how to react.

Your family teaches your brain.

Your friends teach your brain.

Your school teaches your brain.

Your culture teaches your brain.

Even before you were born, your growing brain was already being built and prepared for the world.

And if we go back even further, we discover something amazing. Your brain is carrying lessons from people who lived thousands and thousands of years ago. Long ago, humans had to watch out for wild animals, dangerous weather and enemies.

Brains that noticed danger quickly helped people survive.

Those ancient brains were passed down from generation to generation.

And now you have one.

The problem is that your brain still uses some very old programs.

Sometimes it treats a spelling test like a tiger.

Sometimes it treats a disagreement like a disaster.

Sometimes it acts as though a small problem is a huge one.

That’s why people sometimes overreact.

Their brain is trying to help, but it is using an old solution.

This leads to an important idea:

When someone behaves badly, the first question shouldn’t always be:

“What’s wrong with them?”

A better question might be:

“What problem is their brain trying to solve?”

That doesn’t mean the behaviour is right.

No.

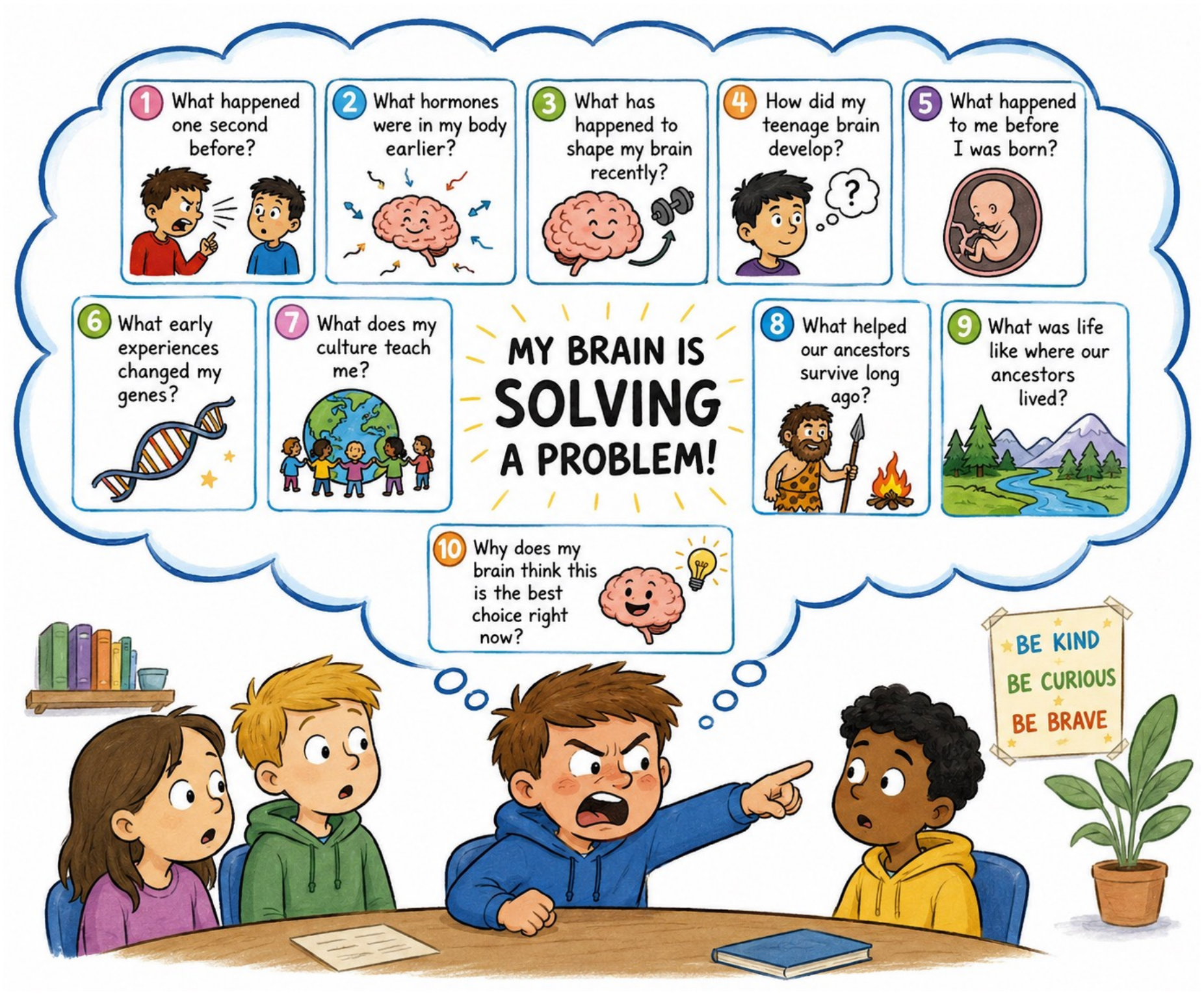
People are still responsible for what they do.

But understanding the brain helps us become kinder, wiser and more curious.

The brain is always solving a problem.

The trick is helping it solve the right problem.

Because sometimes your brain is trying to protect you from a tiger that isn't really there.



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