

ELINOR WONDERS WHY

EP. 139 "Elinor's Circus"

By: Karen Moonah

Elinor's Question: *How can we 'stay up' when we're doing our balancing tricks?*

Logline: *When Elinor and her friends put on a 'circus', they struggle to master balancing tricks - until they observe how using different body parts can help you balance.*

LS2. Understand that animals have different body parts that are used in different ways to meet their needs. d. Explore how different external features of an animal help it survive in its environment. (Elinor and her friends observe how the squirrel's tail helps him balance).

ND3. (RTL Crosscutting concept 'Structure and Function'): Understand that structures and materials in the natural world can be used or can inspire the engineering of structures with similar function in the designed world. (Inspired by the squirrel's tail, Elinor decides to use a long pole to balance in the same way)

SEP1. Asking questions (science) and defining problems (engineering)

b. Ask more complex questions about observable phenomena

c. Ask and/or identify cause and effect questions that can be answered by an investigation

d. Identify a problem that can be solved by the design a new or improved object or tool (engineering). Elinor and her friends ask questions, observe and define their problem (lack of balance) then solve it by using their own bodies (wings, trunk) or by inventing balancing tools.

Mains - Elinor, Ari, Olive, Philbert

Locations: Forest Glade

Props: Top hat, bow, unicycle, helmet, tutu, stilts, streamers, balloons, circus posters, balancing branch.

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FIRST DRAFT: July 18, 2019

1. INT. A 'BIG TOP' CIRCUS (ELINOR'S THOUGHT BUBBLE/FANTASY)

A <FANFARE> plays, as ELINOR, dressed in a top hat ENTERS to stand in a circus ring, under a spotlight.

1 ELINOR (GRANDLY) 1
Ladies and Gentlemen! Friends of
allllll ages! Welcome to the Animal
Town Circus!

The unseen audience in the tent <WHOOPS AND CHEERS>!

OS <CALLIOPE MUSIC> plays, as a spotlight finds ARI, wearing a FANCY HELMET with stars and a BOW TIE, wheeling into the ring on a snazzy UNICYCLE. (Note: he doesn't hold out his arms for balance, but since this is Elinor's daydream, he has no trouble staying up.) <SFX: CROWD OOOOH> WALLA

Next, OLIVE, wearing a TUTU, strides in confidently, on TOWERING STILTS. <SFX: CROWD AHHHH>

Next, we CUT TO Elinor, on the platform of a TIGHT-ROPE. (There's a net.) Without using her arms or a pole to balance, she saunters across the high-wire. <SFX: CROWD CHEERS (MAYBE CHANTS THE NAME "ELINOR" IF POSSIBLE)>

2 OLIVE (VO) 2
Elinor? *Elinor!*

SMASH CUT TO:

NOTE: Or we could WIDEN and PAN DOWN to reveal this is a
THOUGHT BUBBLE

2. EXT. FOREST - DAY

Elinor startles from her daydream. She's standing in a little forest glade which has been decorated for a kid-like circus, with a tent made of streamers, balloons, stumps set up as chairs for the audience, and maybe kid-pictures of clowns etc. Elinor's holding a roll of STREAMER PAPER.

3 Huh? ELINOR 3

Olive comes over, smiling.

4 OLIVE (CHUCKLING) 4
You were daydreaming. What do you
think of our circus tent?

She points up.

CUT WIDE to reveal Ari, just finishing an airy 'ROOF' made of alternating RED AND BLUE PAPER STREAMERS. (These are 'tented' over a high branch, then anchored to low tree branches.)

5 ELINOR 5
Wow, nice job! Our circus is going
to be AMAZING.

6 OLIVE 6
I know. I hope the audience loves
it.

Ari flies back down to join them.

7 ARI 7

Of course they'll love it.

(puffs up, proud)

After all, we have a real circus
tent and a real circus unicycle...

CUT TO a gently used UNICYCLE and HELMET decorated with stars resting nearby.

8 ARI (CONT'D) 8
And a super-fancy circus
helmet...what more could you want?

9 ELINOR (TEASING) 9
A unicycle rider?

But Ari dismisses her teasing with a wave of his hand.

10 ARI (UNCONCERNED) 10
I'll get the hang of it by show
time. I just need some practice.

Olive picks up a pair of low PLAY STILTS lying on the ground.

11 OLIVE 11
I should practice too. I borrowed
these play stilts, so I've never
used them before.

12 ELINOR 12
Okay. And *I'll* work on my tight-
rope walking!

She scans around - her gaze settles on a handy FALLEN LOG.

13 ELINOR (CONT'D) 13
That log should do the trick.

Ari buckles on his helmet, full of excitement.

14 ARI 14
This is going to be the Greatest
Show in Animal Town.

Ari grabs his unicycle by the seat, and stands it up.

ARI (CONT'D)
Now. How do I get up on this thing?

Elinor and Olive <SFX: GIGGLE>

'WHEEL' WIPE TO:

3. EXT. FOREST GLADE - MINUTES LATER

Elinor steps up onto one end of the FALLEN LOG and strikes a confident pose. (This is her 'tight-rope'.)

16 ELINOR (GRAND) 16
Make way for The Amazing Elinor,
the brave tight-rope walker.

Elinor takes a deep breath then tries to walk across the log. (NOTE: She does NOT put out her arms for balance.) After three wobbly steps, she loses her balance and hops off.

17 ELINOR (MUTTERS) (CONT'D) 17
(huff) This is trickier than I
thought.

18	ARI (OS)	18
	<i>Tell me about it.</i>	

CUT TO Ari, who's perched on his low unicycle, awkwardly clutching a small nearby tree for support.

19 ARI (CONT'D) 19
I can get ON my unicycle and push
off, but then look what happens -

Ari demonstrates, letting go of a tree and taking a couple of pedal strokes. (He doesn't hold out his wings for balance yet.) But soon, he starts to wobble and tip sideways -

[illegible]

- and he's obliged to hop off, landing on his feet.

21 ARI (CONT'D) 21
I tip over.

Olive holds a stilt in each hand.

22 OLIVE 22
I know what you mean! Watch...

Olive steps up onto the stilts, and shuffles a few steps -

23 OLIVE (CONT'D) 23
I can go a few steps, but after
that - whoa!

- but then she loses her balance and has to step off.

24 OLIVE (CONT'D) 24
I can't stay up.

Elinor comes over to join her friends.

25 ELINOR 25
Circus performers can do this
stuff, so there has to be a way.
(curious)
What do we have to do, to stay up?

Just then -

26 PHILBERT (OS) 26
Hi!

They turn to see a BOY SQUIRREL bounding over. This is
PHILBERT, a sweet, bright-eyed squirrel who tends to
'upspeak' - he makes everything sound like a question.

27 PHILBERT (CONT'D) 27
I'm Philbert? I just moved here?

28 ELINOR 28
Hi! I'm Elinor. This is Ari, and
Olive.

29 ARI / OLIVE (WAVE) 29
Hi. / Nice to meet you!

Philbert looks up at their streamer 'tent', curious.

30 PHILBERT 30
You too! What'cha doin'?

31 OLIVE 31
Putting on a circus! Want to join
us?

32 PHILBERT (DELIGHTED) 32
Yeah! Can I be in the audience? I
loove clapping and cheering, so
I'd be a reeally good audience?

Elinor shares a grin with her friends.

33 ELINOR 33
That's awesome, we need an
audience. Bu-uut our show's not
quite ready yet.

34 PHILBERT 34
That's okay. It'll take me a while
to find the perfect seat, y'know?

Philbert hops up onto one of the LOGS they've gathered and placed on their ends, like stools. (The stool wobbles, but Philbert uses his tail to counterbalance and stays up.)

35 ELINOR 35
Sit anywhere you like! We'd better
get back to practicing.

Elinor heads back to her log, and hops up onto the end. She tries to walk across, but after a few steps, the same thing happens - she wobbles and steps off.

36 ELINOR (CONT'D) 36
Whoops!

37 PHILBERT (PART OS) 37
Yeah! Go, Elinor!

The other three look over at Philbert, puzzled.

38 PHILBERT (SHEEPISH) (CONT'D) 38
Heh. I'm practicing too. Cheering?
Yaaay!

He mimes 'cheering'. The others <SFX: GIGGLE>

Philbert wobbles on his stool.

39 PHILBERT (CONT'D) 39
I'm gonna try another seat.

He scurries OS to find a better one.

Meanwhile, Elinor tries again to cross her log - same result.

40 ELINOR 40
Oof. What am I doing wrong? What do
real circus performers have that I
don't?

41	PHILBERT (OS)	41
	How about costumes?	

CUT TO Philbert, who is trying out a new perch, on a BOULDER.

42 PHILBERT (CONT'D) 42
You know how they usually wear
sparkly stuff? Or clown costumes?

Olive nods eagerly.

43 OLIVE 43
We have costumes! Let's show him.

Olive goes under the play structure to get a TOTE BAG. From it, she takes out a POLKA-DOT BOW for Ari, a TOP HAT for Elinor, and a TUTU for herself (same as in the opening THOUGHT BUBBLE).

We CUT AWAY to Philbert, while they put on their accessories.

44 PHILBERT 44
Ooh niiice! That makes you guys
look really um, circus-y?

BACK ON Elinor, Olive and Ari, now wearing their costumes.

45 OLIVE 45
I feel circusy.

46 ELINOR 46
Well, we if we feel like circus
people. Maybe that'll help us
perform like circus people, too.

47 ARI 47
Only one way to find out!

Ari picks up his unicycle, and goes back to the tree to help himself get up on it.

48 ARI (CONT'D) 48
(exhale) Okay. Here goes!

He pushes off, wobbling as he pedals. But this time, he holds his elbows out, and he lasts longer before toppling!

49 ARI (CONT'D) 49
I'm doing it, I'm doing it! Oof.

He lands safely on his feet.

CUT TO Philbert, who has moved to a swaying TREE BRANCH, near/above Elinor's log. (Using his tail to counter-balance as he sways, as squirrels do. But no one notices, yet.)

50 PHILBERT 50
See? That was better?

51 ARI (SURPRISED) 51
Yeah! I think holding my wings out
makes it easier, somehow.

Ari gets up and tries again, riding with his arms out
somewhat. When he tips to the right -

52 ARI (CONT'D) 52
Whoa!

- he instinctively reaches/leans to the left, and stays up.

53 ARI (CONT'D) 53
Whew! I thought I was going to
fall.

54 OLIVE 54
Me too. But you didn't!

ANGLE ON Elinor, looking very curious.

55 ELINOR 55
Yes. You were tipping one way, but
then you put your wing out the
other way... and you stayed up.
That's SO interesting!

Ari hops off his unicycle, delighted.

56 ARI 56
So *that's* the secret. You have to
use your wings to stay up!

Olive picks up her play stilts, looking a bit wistful.

57 OLIVE 57
Well I hope that's not the only
way, since we don't have wings.

58 ARI (EAGER) 58
I'm gonna practice some more!

Ari hurries OS with his unicycle.

59 OLIVE 59
Me too. I'll stay close to those
trees so I can grab one if I start
to tip over.

Olive carries her stilts close to a line of small trees (or
maybe there's a rustic fence nearby?), to practice.

60 ELINOR (TO PHILBERT) 60
Let's watch, Philbert. We need more
observations...

Olive steps up on her stilts and shuffles along beside the trees (or fence) . Until... she starts to sway.

[illegible]

CUT TO Elinor and Philbert. (Philbert unconsciously mirrors Olive as she tips, but compensates with his tail to stay up on his branch.)

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62                                ELINOR (CALLS)                                62
                                Grab the branch!
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BACK ON Olive as she uses her trunk to reach for the branch. She doesn't actually touch it - but just the act of reaching for it, shifts her weight and stops her from falling over.

63 OLIVE (SURPRISED) 63
 (gasp) I didn't fall.

64 ELINOR 64
And you didn't grab hold, either.

Olive steps down from her stilts as Elinor comes closer.

65 OLIVE (SURPRISED) 65
I just reached out the other way
with my trunk, and I stayed up.

66 ELINOR 66
So it isn't *just* wings. A trunk can
help you stay up too.

67 OLIVE (PLEASED) 67
Maybe this stilt-walking thing
isn't so hard after all?

Olive eagerly steps up and stilt-walks OS, actively moving her trunk to help balance herself. Elinor watches her go.

68 ELINOR (TO HERSELF) 68
Well, I don't have wings. And I
don't have a trunk. But I am The
Amazing Elinor, and *I will do this.*

Determined, Elinor turns and marches back to her 'tight-rope' log. Philbert scampers to a new perch on the branch of a closer tree, to watch her.

WIPE TO:

4. EXT. FOREST GLADE - PRACTICING MONTAGE

<CIRCUS MUSIC UP> - in QUICK CUTS we see Elinor try over and over, to cross her log without stepping off. (She's still not holding out her arms or ears to help her balance.)

- Elinor takes two wobbly steps, but then loses her balance and has to step off the log.

- Elinor tries shuffling sideways across the log - but the same thing happens.

- Elinor tries hopping across - no luck.

- She tries doing it in a crouch, but still topples over and lands in the grass. <GROAN>.

<MUSIC OUT> - END MONTAGE.

Philbert <CLAPS> and cheers - he's getting really good at being an audience.

69	PHILBERT	69
	Wooh! Yeah! Go, Elinor!	

Elinor sits up, feeling discouraged.

70	ELINOR	70
	Aw, don't clap for <i>that</i> , Philbert.	
	I'm supposed to be a tight-rope	
	walker, not a falling-down clown.	

Ari cycles and Olive stilt-walks over to join them. (Both are doing well at keeping their balance, now.)

71	OLIVE	71
	Don't give up, Elinor.	

72	ARI	72
	Yeah! Sooner or later, you always	
	figure things out.	

73	ELINOR	73
	But if I don't figure it out <u>soon</u> ,	
	then I won't have anything to do in	
	our circus!	

Just then, a single streamer from their 'tent' comes untied from the tree.

74	ARI	74
	Whoops! A streamer came untied.	

He starts over to pick up the end of the streamer, but speedy Philbert gets there first.

75 PHILBERT 75
I'll do it! It's not a problem. Get
it? Knot a problem? (snort-giggle)

Philbert grabs the end of the streamer and carries it up to the tree to re-tie it.

Just then, Elinor notices something.

FRONT ANGLE (HEAD ON) - Philbert confidently walks across the branch with the streamer, in a way that echoes what she's trying to do on her log. Only Philbert has no trouble.

76 ELINOR 76
Wait a second! How'd you do that?

Philbert finishes his knot, then turns proudly to Elinor.

77 PHILBERT 77
Do what - tie a knot? Easy! I was a
squirrel scout.

78 ELINOR 78
No, I mean how do you walk across
that, without tipping over?

Philbert looks down - he hadn't noticed.

79 PHILBERT 79
Oh, that. It's kind of a squirrel
thing? My Mom calls it balancing?

80	OLIVE (NODDING)	80
	Balance! I've heard that word.	

81 ELINOR 81
Then 'balance' is what I need to
get across my log! How do you do
it?

82 PHILBERT (SHRUGS) 82
I just keep the same amount of
'squirrel' on both sides of
whatever I'm balancing on.

Philbert leans out to the left and his big tail waves out to the right to counter-balance him.

83 PHILBERT (CONT'D) 83
If my top goes one way, I just
stick my big tail out the other
way. To make it equal, see?

Elinor frowns, considering her small tail puff.

84 ELINOR 84
That might not work for me. My
tail's pretty small.

Ari turns around to feature his non-existent tail.

85 ARI 85
 (chuckle) Join the club.

86 ELINOR (TO ARI) 86
But you don't *need* a tail to help
you balance. You have wings.

ARI

The Winged Wonder, that's me.

Ari does a quick demo, unicycling with his wings out.

88 OLIVE 88

And I don't use wings *or* my tail.
When I start to tip, I use my trunk
to even things out.

Olive rocks side-to-side on her stilts, swinging her trunk to counterbalance.

CUT TO Elinor, finally 'getting it'.

89 ELINOR 89
I get it. You're all using your
body parts to help you balance. But
I haven't been using *any*. Maybe
that's why I can't stay up?

Elinor hurries back to her log, and hops up to try again.

90 ELINOR (CONT'D) 90
Well, I don't have wings, or a
trunk or a long tail, but I DO have
arms...and ears!

Elinor holds both her arms and ears out horizontally, then carefully starts to walk across. This time she gets further!

91 ELINOR (CONT'D) 91
It's working! Whoa...

- she wobbles and steps off. She chuckles.

92 ELINOR (CONT'D) 92
Well it *helps*, anyway. I wonder -
if my arms and ears were longer,
would it be easier?

CUT TO Olive, as a THOUGHT BUBBLE forms above her. She
pictures Elinor holding out comically long arms and ears.

93 OLIVE 93
(chuckle) It would be *funnier*.

94 ELINOR 94
(laugh) Yeah. But what if I can
borrow something to be like longer
arms? Hmm...

Elinor goes into the bushes, <RUSTLES> around for a moment,
then comes up with a LONG, STURDY, LEAFLESS BRANCH.

95 ELINOR (CONT'D) 95
Like this! Maybe this'll help?

Elinor hops up on her log, holding her branch horizontally
like a proper balance pole. She already looks more secure.

96 ELINOR (CONT'D) 96
Drum roll, please!

Using two sticks, Ari <'DRUM ROLLS'> on one end of her log.

ON Elinor as she takes a deep breath, and starts to walk. She
wobbles - but uses her stick to counter balance, and
recovers. Finally... she makes it all the way across!

97 ELINOR (CONT'D) 97
I did it! I really did it!

Philbert leans over to whisper in Ari's ear. Ari laughs.

98 ARI 98
Yup. NOW we can cheer.

99 PHILBERT / OLIVE / ARI 99
(cheering for Elinor)

WIPE TO:

5. EXT. FOREST GLADE - DAY (MINUTES LATER)

MINUTES LATER - A beaming Elinor has a paper MEGAPHONE in hand. She addresses a 'crowd' of a FEW LOCAL KIDS who have joined Philbert on the log stools to watch the show.

100

ELINOR

100

Ladieees and Gentlemen! Let the
Greatest Show in Animal Town BEGIN!

<MUSIC UP> - as the performers launch into a circus act showcasing the art - and science - of keeping your balance!

SONG - "YOU CAN BALANCE IF YOU TRY"

First Elinor gestures to Ari, riding his unicycle. He holds his wings out 'wide' for balance as he cycles TOWARDS CAMERA.

101

ELINOR / OLIVE / ARI (SING)

101

*To stay upright when you ride
Just keep it even on every side
It's easier if you spread out wide
You can balance if you try*

Now Elinor 'presents' Philbert, back on the wobbly log stool. (As they sing, Philbert sways side to side, clearly using his 'fluffy tail' to counterbalance.)

*A big long tail will help a lot
to keep you balanced on a spot
Just reach it over where you're not
You can balance if you try*

Elinor picks up her long stick and holds it horizontally. (Olive enters, stilt-walking, for the second line.)

*A good long stick can help you out
(just OLIVE, joking)
I like to use my nice, long snout
(ALL)
Staying up is what it's all about
You can balance if you try*

CUT TO Elinor's log, as Elinor runs INTO FRAME and leaps up on one end, holding her balance pole.

*Just practice hard, and there's no
doubt...*

To a <DRUM BEAT>, Elinor crosses the log with a strut in her step - and makes it all the way!

You can balance if you try!

END SONG. The audience jumps to its feet! <SFX: CHEERING!>

WIDE as Elinor, Olive and Ari regroup in the centre of their 'Big Top'. Elinor beckons to Philbert.

102

ELINOR

102

Philbert, I couldn't have done it
without you, come take a bow!

Philbert brightens, and scurries over to join hands with his new friends. As they all take a dramatic and well-deserved bow, we...

FADE OUT.