

ELINOR WONDERS WHY

EP. 120B "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, Siggy

Locations: Forest Glade

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

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FIRST DRAFT: July 18, 2019

SECOND DRAFT: Aug. 13, 2019

POLISH DRAFT: Sept. 11, 2019

RECORD DRAFT: Sept. 25, 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 Gentle-animals! Friends
of alllllll ages! Welcome to the
Animal Town Circus!

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

2 ELINOR (CONT'D) 2
Featuring... The Amazing Ari!

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

3 ELINOR (CONT'D) 3
Olive the Awesome!

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

4 ELINOR (CONT'D) 4
And me... The Extraordinary...

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 (and MAYBE CHANTS THE NAME "ELINOR" IF POSSIBLE)>

5 OLIVE (VO) 5
Elinor? Elinor!

WIDEN and PAN DOWN to reveal this is all happening in Elinor's THOUGHT BUBBLE daydream.

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, paper flowers, stumps set up as chairs for the audience, and maybe kid-pictures of clowns etc. Elinor's holding a roll of STREAMER PAPER.

6 ELINOR 6
Huh?

Olive comes over, smiling.

7 OLIVE (CHUCKLING) 7
You were day-dreaming. 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.)

8 ELINOR 8
Wow, that looks so good! Our circus
show is going to be AMAZING.

9 OLIVE 9
I know. I hope everyone loves it.

Ari flies back down to join them.

10 ARI 10
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.

11 ARI (CONT'D) 11
And a super-fancy circus helmet...
what more could you want?

12 ELINOR (TEASING) 12
A unicycle rider?

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

13 ARI (UNCONCERNED) 13
I'll be riding it by show time. I
just need some practice.

Olive (also wearing a HELMET) picks up a pair of rustic
wooden PLAY STILTS.

14 OLIVE 14
I should practice too. My Mom made
me these stilts, and I haven't
tried them yet.

15 ELINOR 15
Okay. And I'll work on my tight-
rope walking!

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

16 ELINOR (CONT'D) 16
That log should do the trick.

Ari buckles on his helmet, full of excitement.

17 ARI 17
This is going to be the Greatest
Show in Animal Town.

Ari grabs his unicycle by the seat, stands it up, and puts it
a different angles.

18 ARI (CONT'D) 18
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 NARROW FALLEN LOG and
strikes a confident pose. (This is her 'tight-rope'.)

19 ELINOR (GRAND) 19
Make way for The Extraordinary
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.

20 ELINOR (MUTTERS) (CONT'D) 20
(huff) This is trickier than I
thought.

21 ARI (OS) 21
Tell me about it.

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

22 ARI (CONT'D) 22
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 -

23 ARI (CONT'D) 23
Wh-Whoa!

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

24 ARI (CONT'D)

I tip over.

Olive holds a stilt in each hand.

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

I know what you mean! Watch...

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

26 OLIVE (CONT'D)
When I get up on my stilts, I can
take a step... another ste... *whoa!*

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take a step... another ste... *whoa!*

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

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

I can't stay up.

Elinor comes over to join her friends.

28 ELINOR
I know they do this in a real
circus, so there has to be a way.
But how?
(curious)
How do we stay up to do our tricks?

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(curious)

How do we stay up to do our tricks?

Just then -

29 SIGGY (OS)
Hi!

Hi!

They turn to see a BOY SQUIRREL bounding over. This is SIGGY, a sweet, bright-eyed squirrel who tends to 'upspeak' - ie. make everything sound like a question. (*Please don't overdo the 'upspeaking' trait at the voice record. Use it only where it works.)

30 SIGGY (CONT'D)
I'm Siggy? It's short for Sigmund.
I just moved here?

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I just moved here?

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

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

Hi. / Nice to meet you!

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

33 SIGGY 33
You too! What'cha doin'?

34 OLIVE 34
We're putting on a circus! It's
like a show where we do fun tricks.
Want to join us?

35 SIGGY (DELIGHTED) 35
Yeah! Can I watch? I looove
clapping and cheering, so I'd be
reeally good at watching?

Elinor shares a grin with her friends.

36 ELINOR 36
That would be awesome. Bu-uuut our
show's not quite ready yet.

37 SIGGY 37
That's okay. It'll take me a while
to find the perfect seat, y'know?

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

38 ELINOR 38
Sit anywhere you like! We'll 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, she wobbles and
steps off again.

39 ELINOR (CONT'D) 39
Whoops!

40 SIGGY (PART OS) 40
Yeah! Go, Elinor!

The other three look over at Siggy.

41 SIGGY (SHEEPISH) (CONT'D) 41
Heh. I'm practicing my cheering?
Yaaay!

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

Siggy deliberately 'wobbles' his stool, frowning slightly.

42 SIGGY (CONT'D) 42
Hm. I'm gonna try another seat.

He scurries OS to find a better one.

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

43 ELINOR 43
Oof. Why do I keep falling off?

Olive gets an idea.

44 OLIVE 44
Wait! I have something that can help.

Olive eagerly goes behind a log (or some other object) to get her BACKPACK. 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).

45 OLIVE (CONT'D) 45
Costumes! Maybe if we look like we're part of a circus, we'll be able to do the tricks better.

Ari checks out his oversized bow.

46 ARI 46
Awesome!

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

47 SIGGY 47
Ooh niiice! That makes you guys look really um... circus-y?

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

48 OLIVE 48
I feel circusy.

49 ELINOR 49
Ok, now we look like we're part of a circus. Maybe that'll help us.

50 ARI 50
Only one way to find out!

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

51 ARI (CONT'D) 51
(exhale) Okay. Here goes!

He pushes off, wobbling as he pedals. He lasts a tiny little bit longer than before, but he still topples over!

52 ARI (CONT'D) 52
I'm doing it, I'm doing it!
Whoaa... Oof.

He lands (safely but somewhat comically) on the ground.

CUT TO Siggy, 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.)

53 ARI (CONT'D) 53
Nope, still not doing it.

Elinor helps Ari up.

55 ARI 55
Thanks, Siggy.

56 OLIVE 56
Let me try.

Olive fixes her tutu and jumps up on her stilts again. She wobbles for a bit, looking like maybe she's going to stay up, but then she has to step down again.

57 OLIVE (CONT'D) 57
Whoa - oof! Sigh...

Elinor tries next. She shimmies a little bit across the log, but falls off after a few steps.

58 ELINOR (TO HERSELF) 58
 Hmm, the costumes didn't really
 help us stay up.

ARI
We look really cool, though.

60 OLIVE 60
What else can we try?

Siggy also looks perplexed. Just then, a single streamer from their 'tent' comes untied from the tree.

61 ARI 61
Whoops! A streamer came untied.

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

62 SIGGY 62
I'll do it! I can help!

Siggy 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) - Siggy confidently skips over several of the log seats, hops up a few low hanging branches, and walks across the main branch with the streamer, in a way that echoes what they're all trying to do for the circus. Only Siggy has no trouble 'staying up'.

63 ELINOR 63
Wait a second! Siggy, how'd you do that?

Siggy finishes his knot, then turns proudly to Elinor.

64 SIGGY 64
Do what - tie a knot? Easy! I was a squirrel scout.

65 ELINOR 65
No, I mean how did you skip over and walk across the branch like that, without tipping over?

Siggy looks down - he hadn't noticed.

66 SIGGY 66
Oh, that. It's just something that us squirrels do. To keep from falling over? My Mom calls it balancing.

67 OLIVE (NODDING) 67
Balancing! I've heard that word.

68 ELINOR 68
How do you do it?

Siggy demonstrates, leaning out to the left.

69 SIGGY (SHRUGS) 69
Well, I just try to make sure I don't lean my body over too far to one side. And if I start to feel myself tipping over...

He leans a little too far <SFX: WHOOOA> Then his big tail waves out to the right to counter-balance him.

70 SIGGY (CONT'D) 70
I try to move part of my body to
the other side to keep me up.

Then he does the same thing on the other side.

71 SIGGY (CONT'D) 71
See? If my top goes one way, I just
stick my big tail out the other
way. Or if my tail goes this way, I
stick my body or my arms out the
other way. To balance!

Elinor nods, absorbing this.

72 ELINOR 72
Ohhhh.

73 OLIVE 73
Wow, Siggy, that is so cool.

74 ELINOR 74
It is cool! Maybe it's something
we can try for our circus tricks!

75 ARI 75
But... I don't have a tail like
Siggy does.

76 SIGGY 76
No, but you have your wings. You
could use them to help you balance.

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

77 ARI 77
(exhale) Okay. Here goes!

He pushes off, wobbling as he pedals. He's holding on, but it
looks like he's tipping right!

78 ELINOR 78
Ari! Put your wing out to the other
side!

79 ARI 79
Whoa!

Ari reaches out with his wing and leans to the left, and
stays up.

80 ARI (CONT'D) 80
Whew! It worked! I thought I was going to fall.

81 OLIVE 81
But you didn't!

Ari sticks both his wings out and manages to balance on the unicycle (albeit still a little wobbly). ANGLE ON Elinor, looking very curious.

82 ELINOR 82
Yeah, 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. His friends congratulate him over <SFX: YAY! WOO HOO! WALLA>.

83 OLIVE 83
I want to try it now. Maybe I can use my trunk to balance?

Olive picks up her play stilts. She steps up on her stilts and shuffles along beside the trees until she starts to sway.

84 OLIVE (CONT'D) 84
Whoa -

She starts to tip over backwards.

85 ELINOR (CALLS) 85
Olive, move your trunk in front of you!

Olive uses her trunk to reach forward, which shifts her weight and stops her from falling over.

86 OLIVE (SURPRISED) 86
(gasp) I didn't fall.

87 ELINOR 87
It worked!

Olive finds her balance: still a bit wobbly, she uses her trunk to balance on the stilts. After a beat, she steps down from her stilts, pleasantly surprised. Elinor comes closer.

88 OLIVE 88
I just reached out the other way with my trunk, and I stayed up.

89 ARI 89
That was so cool!

90 OLIVE (PLEASED) 90
Maybe this stilt-walking thing
isn't so hard after all? Thanks,
Siggy!

91 SIGGY (MODEST) 91
Aw, it's as easy as fallin' off a
log. (beat) I mean - not falling
off a log.

Elinor smiles wryly at Siggy, then turns back to her log.

92 ELINOR (TO HERSELF) 92
Well, I don't have wings. And I
don't have a trunk. But I am The
Extraordinary Elinor, and I will do
this.

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

93 ELINOR (CONT'D) 93
Hmm, I DO have my arms... and
ears... I'll try that!

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

94 ELINOR (CONT'D) 94
It's working! Whoa...

- she wobbles and steps off. She chuckles.

95 ELINOR (CONT'D) 95
Well it *helps*, anyway. I wish my
arms and ears were longer. I bet
that would help me balance more.

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

96 OLIVE 96
(chuckle) It would be *funnier*.

97 ELINOR 97
(laugh) Yeah. I wonder how I can
get longer arms? Hmm...

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

98 ELINOR (CONT'D) 98
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.

99 ELINOR (CONT'D) 99
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!

100 ELINOR (CONT'D) 100
I did it! I really did it! I felt I was falling one way, so I moved the stick the other way, and I didn't fall.

101 OLIVE 101
You balanced!

102 ELINOR 102
We all balanced!

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

103 ARI 103
Yup. NOW we can cheer.

104 SIGGY / OLIVE / ARI 104
(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 Siggy on the log stools to watch the show.

105 ELINOR 105
Ladieees and Gentle-animals! 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.

106

ELINOR / OLIVE / ARI (SING)

106

*To not fall down when you ride
Just stay even on every side
It's easier if you spread out wide
You can balance if you try*

Now Elinor 'presents' Siggy, back on the wobbly log stool. (As they sing, Siggy 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 put 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)
OLIVE: I like to use my nice, long
snout
(she wiggles her trunk to
demo)
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 Siggy.

107

ELINOR

107

Siggy, we couldn't have done it
without you, come take a bow!

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

FADE OUT.

108 - Siggy live