

Phenomena of Touch

So the next generation will not confuse the 'Touch' with telephone

The benefits of touch

- Trust
- Security
- Self-worth
- Self-esteem
- full intellectual potential
- Ease in thinking logically
- Self reliance
- Handle stress and frustration
- Develop conscience
- Handle fear and worry
- Develop future relationships
- Reduce jealousy

Ref. Touch Research institute and British Agencies for adoption and fostering

In the past decade, research institutes worldwide have proven touch is a critical factor for growth, development and health

Physiologists call a baby's need of touch for survival the Primary Attachment Law. It helps explain why 99 per cent of babies in infant orphanages have died within a year in spite of adequate physical care. It was from lack of touch and attachment, which is as important as food in the first period of a child's life. A child's growth and development thrives on touch, but how will they learn about love and affection if not through touch? A research summary from the US Touch Research Institute shows that touch deprivation may produce

- Lack of trust in others
- Depressive and autistic behaviour
- Difficulty recognising feelings in others
- Trouble recognising one's own feelings
- Demand for affection, but lack of depth in relationships
- Craving for control in all situations
- Impaired social maturity
- Difficulty expressing oneself well verbally
- Delays in personal social development
- More frequent illnesses, particularly upper respiratory infections, as a result of a suppressed immune system from early childhood.

The need for wellbeing

The brain has right (or emotional) and left (or logical) hemispheres which are connected by a cable like structure called the corpus callosum. This has to be adequately maintained to enable proper communication between the hemispheres. Western education methods engage mainly only the

logical side while in Maori education the major common factors are aroha (love) and mirimiri (touch)

The curriculum for health and Physical Education clearly states the need for well being or hauora. Hauora represents the physical, emotional, social and spiritual development with an emphasis on values and beliefs such as friendship and interpersonal relationships. Feelings of belonging, compassion and caring can all be expressed and developed through the use of massage in schools, thereby adding meaning and purpose to reinforce personal identity with a strong sense of self.

How do we stop these concepts from becoming empty slogans and change them into real, practical programmes which teach our children the true meaning of friendship, belonging and compassion?

- Touch should be introduced through the education system as quickly as possible to minimise the consequences of lack of attachment in early childhood
- Approximately 70 per cent of women suffer from postnatal depression which deprives new born babies of touch at the most crucial time.
- Deprivation of touch at home can lead to depression and youth suicide. School programmes with children as teachers for other children are recognised as beneficial in education worldwide. Examples are the Cool School Peer Mediation Program by Yvonne Ducan, or the Children Teaching Children (CTC) programme at the Jewish-Arab Centre for Peace Around the World in Givat Haviva, Israel. Children massaging children in classrooms during school time is a very successfully used in Sweden where 9000 teachers have already been trained in massage. Research on 150 preschool children from the Psychiatric Clinic for Children in Uppsala and the Karolinska institute clearly shows that, with massage, the level of aggression, anxiety and stress are lower, children function better in groups and psychosomatic illnesses are fewer.
- Participation in a Touch Research Institute workshop gave me an insight into the seriousness of touch deprivation. So, in 2000 I registered the Touch Love Health (TLH) Trust. TLH Trust is a non-profit organisation bringing educational and practical programmes of touch through massage to New Zealand communities
- TLH promotes the fundamental right of all children to be nurtured, to be safe and to belong; essential and basic needs for a child's health and wellbeing.
- TLH aims to create national programmes and workshops to help in the prevention of child abuse, depression and suicide. Children Massaging Children (CMC) workshops are presently the main focus of the Trust's education programmes. Each workshop is a 50 minute lesson which integrates with the school curriculum. Supervised by a teacher, children massage each other accompanied by specially prepared music. Different techniques are used for the hands, arms, back and head to offer the maximum possible benefits

TLH Workshops in New Zealand

CMC first presented a workshop four years ago at the Children Health Camp in Pakuranga and for three years workshops have been included in the children's school holiday programme at Mt. Albert YMCA

TLH Children Massaging Children (CMC) workshops are presently being used as a pilot programme in an Auckland Primary School. Ten teachers from Marlborough Primary School in Auckland trained as facilitators during our first Workshop for Teachers in August 2002 which has prepared them to facilitate massage in the classroom where they feel it could aid the learning process. Two months later, the children were asking for massage lessons.

Scientists Melva Martin and Griselda Blazye from the Naturopathic College of New Zealand Training and Research Centre are currently conducting research into the benefits of CMC and results will be available early next year.

Probably most of know the Telecom advert with two little boys from different cultures, which shows a growing friendship between them. The ad is very evocative - it touches our hearts.

Healthy options Dec 02/Jan 03 pages 70 - 71