

CHILDREN MASSAGING CHILDREN

The best example of right brain learning process is HAUORA

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"We should take care not to make the intellect our god; it has of course powerful muscles, but no personality. It cannot lead; it can only serve." — Albert Einstein

WHAT DID THE genius Einstein have in mind when writing this?

What Einstein calls the "powerful muscles of the intellect" corresponds to our left brain, the neocortex, where we learn such skills as mathematics. The "personality" is our right brain capabilities based on the subcortex/limbic processes that correspond to our values of compassion, empathy and love. Both are necessary functions but it is, we believe, the personality that should be at the forefront and lead the way.

The Children Massaging Children (CMC) programme is a process supporting the subcortex/limbic/emotional development of the growing brain. The New Zealand Schools' Curriculum is based on left brain education which prepares our children for the world ahead but the curriculum also encourages right brain Learning by supporting HAUORA lessons in primary schools all over the country.

Whilst virtual technology is a useful metaphor for left brain education, the values of empathy and love or right brain learning are best defined through the concept of Hauora and teaching children how to massage children.

Let's look more closely and see the relationship and balance between these two types of learning.

What do statistics tell us? Most if not all schools in the Western World are equipped with computers.

In the USA there is an average of 3 students for 1 computer in the classroom.

- In New Zealand evidence shows a similar trend. Statistics also indicate that in 75 % of homes there is at least 1 computer.
- We have iPod's, iPads and the Internet. More technological novelties are continually being produced. There are free technological resources available for teachers ready to be used in classrooms all over the world. Thanks to the outreach of sponsors such as "The Gates Foundation" and "Google" some of the best lessons by the best teachers are recorded as free online education media. There is no doubt that children continue to benefit from this technology.

It is evident that, whether we like it or not, within the last decade technology that supports left brain learning has conquered education worldwide.

Those working in technology recognise the importance of right brain development alongside the left brain and tend to choose schools like 'Waldorf' schools for their children that have a heavy arts related curriculum including play, art, music and physical activities. They recognise the importance of values of empathy, sharing, love and appreciation of nature and prefer that technology is not introduced until children reach their late teens.

Young parents working for Google and Apple say: "... we make technology as brain-dead easy to use as possible. There's no reason why kids can't figure it out when they get older. It's like learning to use toothpaste." (NY Times)

If virtual reality is introduced while the natural reality experiential senses are still forming in a child's brain, critical experiences in the development and stabilization of their natural reality are displaced and pushed aside with worrying results.

To have an appropriate relationship with a screen-based virtual reality one must first have a well-developed physical, emotional, cognitive foundation in what used to be the only reality – natural experience and relationship based perception – what Einstein named "personality"

It is capacity not content that real learning cultivates.

The whole body with all its senses, feelings, movement and thought, interacting with the natural world, interacting with peers around them – seeing them when they are happy and feeling happiness with them, seeing them when they are crying and being ready to help teaches empathy.

Engagement in the world around them; playing, running, jumping, smelling, touching, laughing, dancing and singing and the quiet, intuitive inner 'knowing' time, sharing meaning with all surrounding habitants – this is what influences the development of a healthy, balanced personality.

Buzzing, flashing, gadget, flat TV screen with animated artificial worlds and violent games – "powerful muscles of technology" as Einstein called it, should not be seen by us as

an example of 'real' life and yet for many children this 'virtual reality' has become their 'real' life.

There is a big danger for future generations to have leaders with 'reptilian minds', the ancient part of our brain controlling

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our most primitive and aggressive needs, combining with tools of high technology.

Because of the dominance of technology, we appear to have lost equilibrium. We miss the right brain learning aspect. Creativity expert Sir Ken Robinson warns us that schools kill creativity: http://www.ted.com/talks/ken_robinson_changing_education_paradigms.html

He contends that:

- Teachers report: little or no empathy in classrooms
- Teachers complain: students have a very short attention span during lessons
- Students have little respect for themselves or for others

Flooded with technology that is easily 'digested' and immediately forgotten, the natural ability of children to be empathic and responsive is lost. It is easy to see why this happens when we understand where creativity and empathy originate.

Allan N. Schore, Assistant Clinical Professor of Psychiatry and Bio-behavioral Sciences at UCLA Medical School discovered that during the first 18 months of life a baby builds self-perception and perception of the universe. Elements of bonding and secure attachment influence growth and development of the right hemisphere of the brain which is responsible for intuition, creativity, empathy and social skills.

If a baby is surrounded by a friendly, loving environment and if the primary caregivers give the child love and attention, if they communicate through loving touch and language, the child's self perception and perception of the world around it will be positive. The child will develop high self-esteem and a high degree of trust towards people. It will be optimistic, open minded, interested to learn and investigate the world around it. The child will develop empathy.

If however the baby is neglected and raised without loving touch (the main element of bonding and secure attachment) it will grow to be shy, display fearful personality traits with low self-esteem and a negative perception of the universe and themselves. The child will lack the skills of empathy.

The 'hardware' or implicit memory in these two cases will be totally different. The first will be connected, optimistic and ready to learn. The second will be lonely, depressed, violent and disconnected, will suffer emotionally and, when growing up and as an adult, will create problems for society.

In 2006 an open letter by the *Daily Telegraph* to the UK Government entitled "Urgent National Debate" was signed by one hundred authorities including. Allan N. Schore, Sir Richard Bowlby and Steve Biddulph. The initiators of this debate warned that 40% of toddlers in the UK and America will not develop a secure attachment.

What are the consequences of not developing a Secure Attachment?

- Addiction to sensory stimulation in adulthood (sexual abuse, drug use, crime)
- Depressive and autistic behaviour
- Violent and aggressive behaviour
- Difficulty in recognizing the feelings of others
- Trouble recognizing own feelings
- Impaired social maturity

The following is from the British Agencies for Adoption and Fostering, 1981, Fahlberg, London.

Maria Montessori, claimed that "... humankind abandoned in the early formative period becomes the worst threat to its own survival".

During the process of bonding and building secure attachment (which is simply tuning into, interacting and playing with primary caregiver) all the senses are involved. The child's brain produces endorphins – hormones of happiness which, in a growing brain, influences the formation of rewards pathways. <http://learn.genetics.utah.edu/content/addiction/reward/>

These rewards pathways are the foundation of proper mental, emotional, spiritual and physical development. If the rewards pathway is not properly developed in early childhood then a 'band aid' will often be needed later: Antidepressants are one such (highly



Children massaging children – Malborough

ineffective and often dangerous) 'band aid' or management tool. Prozac has been demonstrated to have suicidal effects on children and youth (*the Columbine School shooting tragedy was carried out by youths who had been on Prozac for several years*).

There is an answer, the HAUORA system of Children Massaging Children. Hauora is an indigenous Maori term which stands for:

- Taha tinana – physical well-being
- Taha hinengaro – mental and emotional well-being
- Taha whanau – social well-being
- Taha wairua – spiritual well-being

The Children Massaging Children (CMC) program fully fits these objectives.

In 2006 Jill Morgan (Dip Tch, ND, RMT) from the Eastern Institute of Technology in Hastings researched the effects of the *Children Massaging Children* programme on 140 pupils over a 15 week period at the decile 1 Ebbett Park Primary School. Research showed that the program improved the following:

- Ability to do school work
- Relationship with peers
- Children's relationship with their fathers at home

The last finding listed, i.e. the improvement of relationship with father or male figure at home has a huge significance in New Zealand. Changing the atmosphere at home, improving the emotional climate within the family can contribute enormously to the child's learning process and should be taken very seriously.

Most importantly, touch is a universal language that knows no cultural barriers.

The preventative and ongoing values of the CMC programme cannot be ignored. Children who practice CMC in the classroom will learn more easily and will therefore have better career outcomes. They will also later become better parents for their own children.

Continuation of the research 6 years later by the same scientist under the umbrella of Auckland University emphasized long lasting benefits for children practicing the Children Massaging Children programme at school. <http://childconnection.org.nz/research/>

Children from disadvantaged environments; neglect, depression, drug addiction, violent mothers, those who have not experienced loving, positive touch, whose 'nanny' is often the television set have their 'Hardware', their brain and nervous system, poorly set up and the multiple intelligences that make for a fully-rounded personality cannot be accessed so readily.

There is however a chance to change their behaviour by providing a new and positive experience at school, kindergarten or other educational establishment with the CMC programme.

Technology at school serves everyone but if it is not balanced with right brain learning processes it can only increase the distance between student's behaviour and their ambitions. The gap between the students who have their brain properly 'Hardwired' and therefore are doing well at school and those who have not experienced bonding and secure attachment will also grow wider.

We have established that listening to and following the instructions in the "Massage a Back" song in a classroom makes children feel closer to each other, empathically and friendly towards each other without the need for further explanation. According to research by Carolynska Institute, Uppsala University, Sweden children who practice massage in schools do not fight with each other. Supervised by a trained teacher, children who enjoy close contact with each other develop empathy. The same positive reaction has been seen by us regardless of whether the programme is run in New Zealand schools or kindergarten or in Polish ones.

We strongly believe in the future of 'All Brain Education' as it can restore a sense of proportion between the left and right brain hemispheres and if we achieve that the whole of society benefits.

Eva Scherer is the CEO of the 'Child Connection Trust' and aims to introduce positive touch and massage into the mainstream education system as a prevention of child abuse and family violence. She was awarded a community award for excellence and her Child Massaging Children (CMC) programme has been used in research projects and been the subject of a master's degree. Eva is a pioneer in this field and her programme helps children relax, teaches empathy and demonstrates how emotional well being and positive self-perception enhance the quality of learning.

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