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Education

Health

Environment

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Creativity

Balancing stress and improving the learning process

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Among every 150 children there is a child struggling with conditions in the autistic spectrum such as ADD, ADHD and Dyslexia.

Approximately 25% of our children leave school without full reading and writing capabilities. This figure grows every year and over the years we have seen increased numbers of children embarking on school life with poor brain function and learning disabilities. In the Australian Capital Territory this year (2010), children beginning school with special needs requirements increased by 22.2%. If the brain isn't functioning properly, then all the extra special needs teaching has little to no effect. Drugs such as Ritalin and amphetamines do not improve a child's mind; they simply mask the symptoms and dull the brain.

What many adults don't know is that children with ADD, ADHD, Dyslexia and other labels often have very clever, evolved minds. It is our job to listen and become aware of what the children are doing and saying; they are in fact awakening us to greater creativity, and to different ways of learning.

Stress is a major cause of impaired brain function in children. When you work with children to release stress you see profound changes in their brain function very quickly; faster than what you'll see in an adult.

When stressed your brain cannot function at optimum power.

Stress is caused by emotions, consciously and unconsciously; air and food quality; what you drink; how long you spend in front of the computer and television; the amount of electric magnetic radiation and heavy metals in your environment and body.

Stress has such a negative impact on the body that it affects your health and ultimately compromises the brain. It causes distractibility and a scattered mind.

Stress impairs dopamine, a key neurotransmitter responsible for the integration of thoughts and feelings. When your brain is deficient in dopamine you experience a lack of pleasure and ability to feel love; and a lack of remorse for actions.

In order to optimise the mind, a return serving the human body naturally and gently is the only path. Nourishing and nurturing the brain, coupled with movement, can greatly optimise brain function.

The answers are simple: love, oxygen, water, healthy living foods, exercise, meditation and play. It is a simple formula and easier to implement than you think.

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Love

The most powerful emotion you possess is LOVE. When you are in a space of love, it's power is so strong it releases stress and fears, builds confidence and self esteem, evokes caring and kindness and opens the mind to the joy of learning

To move into your heart space at any time, focus on your heart and remember all the wonderful people and things you love in your life. To connect your mind and heart, hold one hand up near the brain, the other at the heart and focus on moving them alternatively up and down. For optimal brain function you need to combine the power of both mind and heart intelligence. When mind and heart are in synch you're able to make better decisions for the best outcomes.

Oxygenation

Our air is polluted. In the last 50 years we have we have lost HALF of all the Earth's forests due to our consumptive demands. That's a 50% reduction in available oxygen.

Unless you consciously bring more air into your body, you are only absorbing around 4% of oxygen whilst your body and mind requires 35% for optimum function.

Most of us don't know how to breathe properly; our brains are screaming out for more oxygen. To release stress and increase the uptake of oxygen to the brain take 4 or 5 deep breaths. Breathe deeply to the stomach; pretend you are blowing up a balloon and release the air slowly. Not too many times or you may hyperventilate. When practiced daily you will soon automatically breathe deeper and slower.

Another way to quickly balance your brain with oxygen is to breathe in through one nostril for four breaths, hold for four, and breathe out the other nostril for four. Alternate the nostrils and continue for a few more breaths.

Oxygen removes stress and clears the mind so open the windows and doors and let the fresh air in to revitalise all that old stale air.

- If possible sleep with an open window.
- Get out under a tree and start breathing.

Nature gives us our oxygen and returns us back to our true selves.

Hydration

Your body is 75% water and your brain, 85%, so the more you top up with water throughout, the better your brain functions. To demonstrate this to children we use a saucer in which we place dirt to indicate a brain that is clogged and muddy. We then pour in water until all the mud displaces and the children can see how water brings clarity to the mind.

Manufactured fizzy drinks are packed with sugar which is so highly processed that the words sweet white and deadly and white man's poison should be inscribed in every supermarket, every kitchen, school canteen and the mind of every person. And don't believe that sugar-free is any better. Aspartame is the key ingredient – an artificial sweetener that causes more problems for the brain and body: break down Aspartame and you'll find formaldehyde in the chain.

Speak to a child with learning difficulties and they'll frequently tell you their brain is fuzzy and foggy. Processed sugar chemically changes the brain to experience similar effects to too much alcohol. Many children today are walking around with the equivalent of an alcoholic haze day after day.

To release stress and optimise your brain function, drink water and plenty of it. Remember, too, that wonderful cup of coffee you might enjoy, dehydrates your body and jangles the nerves causing stress in the body.

Healthy Food

Nourishing your brain with healthy food is a very simple solution. Fill your shopping list with as many organic fruits and vegetables as possible, as every piece is filled with vitamins and minerals that our brain and body needs. There are a treasure trove of foods we can easily find which provide for our optimal health. For example:

- Mangosteen has enough vitamin B to last us for 3 months!
- Oranges packed enough vitamin C to feed your body its daily needs.
- Broccoli is a wonderful source of zinc.
- Omega 3 oil is vital for brain function...a great source is oysters.
- Walnuts in shape look exactly like the brain; it is a signature food and holds all the nutrients that are best for your brain.
- And as they rightly say, an apple a day keeps the doctor away. Why? Because apples contain Vitamin C and contain cholesterol-reducing properties.

When we're working with children we talk about nature's packaging as a way of easily choosing healthy food options. For example, a banana skin is the natural packaging, a cardboard box is not.

Your body requires a balance of around 25% acid foods and 75% alkaline foods to maintain optimal health. When you strike this balance your brain and moods become balanced and this flows on to boost your immune system and overall health.

An acidic body is a major cause of illness and disease. There are many charts available on the internet on acid/alkaline foods to help you strike the balance. The simple way to remember is that almost all vegetables are alkaline, with the exception of tomatoes and potatoes, and mostly everything else is acid.

Work with the acid/alkaline balance every day and you will discover a profound difference in your health and brain function. You can test yourself with an acid/alkaline PH strip easily found in your local chemist.

For optimal health and brain function the acid/alkaline balance is the foundation of healthy eating. It should be mandatory for everyone, especially those suffering from depression.

The message is simple: to optimise brain function and release stress, eat fresh, living, chemical-free foods from the earth, and leave all those packages on the shelf.

There is not a doubt in my mind that in Australia we are seeing and experiencing malnutrition-affected brains. In this land of plenty our children are malnourished by foods empty of vitamins and minerals. And beware of synthetic additives in packaged foods; these are not nature's way of providing the body with healthy vitamins and minerals.

This is a story about a man I know of around 50 years old. He could hardly speak and as a child would have been known as being retarded and fat. He could only make very strange sounds using three or four words at a time. At 50 he was told he had diabetes; he asked his doctor if there was another way other than depending on insulin and his doctor suggested changing his diet might work.

He gave up everything with processed sugar including all fizzy drinks. He ate healthy natural foods, drank plenty of water and walked four hours every day. Within a few short months his diabetes levels dropped away significantly; and for the first time in 50 years HIS BRAIN BEGAN TO WORK. His language became lucid, and you could engage in a long conversation with him. I discovered he was a man of great practical knowledge and insight.

He decided he would go to TAFE to learn to read. When they tested him, he had the reading level of a four year old! What a wasted, cruel life that as a child and teenager he was told he had a mental disorder; all because those around him did not understand the harm that sugar, chemicals and so-called treats were doing to his brain. This is happening to our children now in vast numbers.

Movement

If you haven't got time for a lot of sport, simply walk, walk, walk. Avoid using the car; instead walk to the shops. Get up early and go for a walk, preferably in a park or by the water; somewhere in nature.

Nature has a profound effect on reducing stress.

When in the overload or overwhelm of stress it is easy to become stuck in the mid brain; it becomes fuzzy and the ability to focus is impaired. When stuck in the mid brain the 'fight or flight' response activates, often resulting in anger, frustration, being punchy or withdrawing from people (note that we see these behaviours in the autistic spectrum).

When this happens it is time to do a Brain Gym cross over movement. Why? Because moving the limbs across the mid-line of the body brings the brain into balance. Lift and bend your left leg, take your right elbow to the top of your left leg, then lift and bend your right leg bringing your left elbow to the top of your right leg. Continue several times.

You can do it any time you feel you have been using one hemisphere of the brain for too long. For example, if you have been studying or writing for a long time.

Another great way to release stress with Brain Gym is performed easily sitting or standing. Cross your hands over in front of you with palms together and little fingers facing upwards (like a crossed prayer position). Now cross your feet. This activates the brain to allow stress to simply dissolve. You can do it for a minute or more depending on how stressed you feel.

If you are feeling anxious about a meeting and need more confidence, give your thymus gland (on your chest bone) a quick thump. Monkeys and gorillas know this. You'll often see them thumping their chests, especially the head of the pack.

Meditation

Take the time to be still and focus within. An hour worth of meditation is equal to three hours of sleep. Meditation calms the mind, brings clarity, releases stress and makes you look years younger. Fit meditation into your day if not for an hour, start with 10-20 mins morning and night.

Play

Play is vital to our well being for people of all ages.

Skip, spin, laugh, play; they all increase dopamine levels in your brain. It's important to remember that a child who does not play does not develop dopamine, paving the way for mental problems.

Play brings forward the fun in life; the laughter, communication skills, feelings and touch. Children who miss out on play and touch have on average a brain that is 20-50% smaller (Bruce Perry).

Laughter is the best medicine, so laugh a lot, be joyful and you will release stress easily.

By now you will realise the importance of releasing stress for better brain function. I invite you to share my passion to help the millions of children globally to know that they do not have a 'disordered' mind or mental problem. We must help them to know they are not the problem; our crazy, noisy world with sensory overload is the cause. We need help them reconnect with natural ways to release stress and bring their brain into a coherent state.

Remember to optimise your brain function. Connect with your heart and use your heart and brain intelligence in unison. Oxygenate and alkalise your body, eat organic living foods, drink clean clear water, and get out and exercise; meditate and play, nurture your mind and most of all, Love.

Love your life, love your body, love your brain and love the joy of learning