

The Smart Connection

Newsletter for Students, Parents, and Educators

Smart Tutor Referrals

www.SmartTutorReferrals.com

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News & Announcements

We've Moved

Our office is now located at:

- ▶ 7281 Chatwell Drive
Saanichton, BC
V8M 1M8

New telephone number is:

- ▶ 250-544-1588

Upcoming Workshops

The following STR workshop is being hosted by Pearkes Recreation Centre.

To register, please call Pearkes at 475-5400, or register online at:

www.gov.saanich.bc.ca/resident/recreation/prc.html

▶ Provincial Exam Prep

date: Saturday, June 2, 2007

time: 10:00 am - 1:00 pm

cost: \$65

More Brain Info. & Links

Michael Moore of *thinkfast* Cognitive Training in Victoria says, "the brain, as any other muscle, can be developed and strengthened at any age. The harder you work at it the more you'll improve your thinking skills."

For a good workout he suggests trying some of these sites:

<http://brainmetrix.com/index>

<http://braintrain.com.au/default.aspx>

Read more on training your brain at these sites:

<http://www.ornery.org/essays/warwatch/2005-06-26-1.html>

<http://www.playattention.com/attention-deficit/articles/category/training-the-brain/>

<http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2006/09/060920093024.htm>

http://money.cnn.com/magazines/fortune/fortune_archive/2006/10/30/8391729/index.htm

Michael Moore at *thinkfast* uses the PACE cognitive training program and MTC (Master the Code). For more information call 588-3797 thinkfasttraining.com

Re-Training the Brain

This month's article is an interview with Craig Shaw, owner of Springboard Cognitive Training in Victoria. Craig is a former teacher and counsellor. He now works with children with learning difficulties to address and correct their learning issues at the cognitive level.

STR: What is "cognitive processing," and how is it linked to learning and learning difficulties?

CS: Cognitive processing is how your brain works to process information and remember things, which is absolutely essential to the learning process in general. Quite often, however, the root causes of learning difficulties can be rooted even deeper than the cognitive level.

A good way to look at the basics of learning is to think of the ABC's:

A – Attention

B – Balance

C – Co-ordination

We know that kids who have difficulty paying attention in class are not going to do well. A high percentage of kids who struggle in school have balance difficulties and problems with their inner ear, and they often have subtle and not so subtle co-ordination problems – like issues with gross and fine motor skills which can affect written output, sitting still in class as well as a broad range of underlying skills that are required to succeed in school. For kids with more pronounced learning difficulties, these skills are absolutely critical because they underlie higher cognitive difficulties.

The neuro-developmental aspects of the brain are deep down in the brain stem which is developed early on, usually in a child's first year, and very often kids with learning difficulties will not have gone through the early stages of their develop-

-ment fully – they may have skipped or omitted stages in their early development – and this affects their attention, balance and co-ordination. I believe that these deeply rooted weaknesses often need to be dealt before we can expect broad academic success. If these are deeper issues that aren't dealt with, it can be like building another floor on a house without a good foundation.

STR: What are some symptoms of neuro-developmental delays?

CS: There is a broad range of difficulties that may occur – they are hints of lags or delays:

- ▶ Trouble sitting still
- ▶ Difficulty sensing where the body is in space (lack of body awareness)
- ▶ Difficulties forming letters when writing (here, the higher part of the brain is compensating for what is automatic for most people. These kids don't get to a place where writing is automatic, so structuring sentences and punctuation become nearly impossible to perform; they are struggling so much with performing the basics of writing.)
- ▶ Signs of social immaturity
- ▶ Difficulties in areas like bed-wetting
- ▶ Difficulties learning to dress themselves
- ▶ Slow learning to ride a bicycle
- ▶ Slow learning to read from an analog clock
- ▶ Letter reversals
- ▶ Skipping lines when reading

STR: Can neuro-cognitive training address these learning issues?

CS: Yes. There has been a revolution in research – we've got a much better handle on how people learn than even 10 years ago. Now, more practitioners are able to take this research and design programs that target the areas of the brain or sensory system that are holding the student back.

About Us

Our Mission Is:

- ▶ To provide top quality, flexible learning support and service to students and parents of students through:

Superior private tutoring matched specifically to each student's needs.

Stimulating workshops building skills in a practical and creative way.

- ▶ To enhance students' skills and increase learning confidence through individualized support, recognizing each student's unique abilities.
- ▶ To improve the quality of life, in individuals and communities through education.

Our tutors are certified teachers and professionals. Each is carefully screened and selected to match individual students' needs.

We help students to achieve.

For more information and resources, visit us on-line at:

www.SmartTutorReferrals.com

Contact Us

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I often see significant improvements for kids with mild learning difficulties within 6 months by doing an intensive cognitive training program. Students with more pronounced difficulties take longer, but they can also be trained to learn more easily.

STR: What is the background of neuro-cognitive training?

CS: The INPP, The Institute of Neuro-Physiological Psychology, where I did my training, was founded in 1975 in England. They've been working with kids all over Europe since 1975, fine-tuning and improving their program as they've learned more and more. They have institutions, which are training facilities, run by doctors, occupational therapists, physical therapists, psychologists, educators, and neuro-psychologists. People from all over the world go to the main institute in England to receive training. In jurisdictions in Europe, INPP is considered on rank with occupational therapy (OT).

There is an interesting story behind the INPP program's popularity in the U.K. There, they track kids every three years with standardized tests – in Northern U.K. they were using the INPP program in schools without informing the government. Kids in the lower percentiles in northern U.K. were making significant progress within three years, so the national government looked into what they were doing in the schools. Now, the Ministry of Education in the U.K. is hoping to make the INPP program available to as many schools as they can.

It's a user-friendly way to help with a child's neurological maturity that can have major impacts on their learning, behaviour, and general co-ordination.

STR: What kinds of improvements do you see with neuro-cognitive training?

CS: Of course the results vary, but in general, students make significant gains in their attention, memory, self-esteem,

reasoning, and general processing which lead to easier, faster learning. They usually become more proficient at reading, writing, spelling and math.

STR: What kinds of neuro-cognitive training programs do you offer?

CS: I have a number of different programs to address students' individual needs, including: the INPP, which is a home program, where parents work with their kids 5-10 minutes/day for about one year; LIFT – Listening Fitness, which improves auditory processing; Interactive Metronome – used by pro sports teams and in schools in the U.S. like the Julliard School for Music – it enhances the connections between movement, listening and learning; PACE – which focuses on memory, concentration, auditory and visual processing, reasoning and processing speed – PACE is the largest cognitive training program of its type in the world with over fifteen hundred trainers in North America, but only two in Victoria.

STR: Are there some things that parents can do at home to support the cognitive development of their kids?

CS: We've known for a long time that there is a connection between movement and learning. One of the best things parents can do is be sure that kids are physically active – exercise is crucial to optimum brain performance.

As well, be sure to support kids with:

- ▶ Regular sleep patterns
- ▶ Healthy diet – especially fruits and vegetables
- ▶ Omega oils
- ▶ Music and dance (these are fantastic training for the brain: connecting sounds with movement, which is essentially what writing is – connecting sound, through language, and movement)
- ▶ Exercise programs which bring an awareness of the link between mind and body like yoga, pilates, tai chi, taekwondo, and qi gong are also very good.

*You'll find more information at www.inpp.org.uk, or read *The Well Balanced Child* by Sally Goddard Blythe. You can contact Craig Shaw of *SpringBoard Training* at 250-888-5453 or www.springboardtraining.bc.ca.*