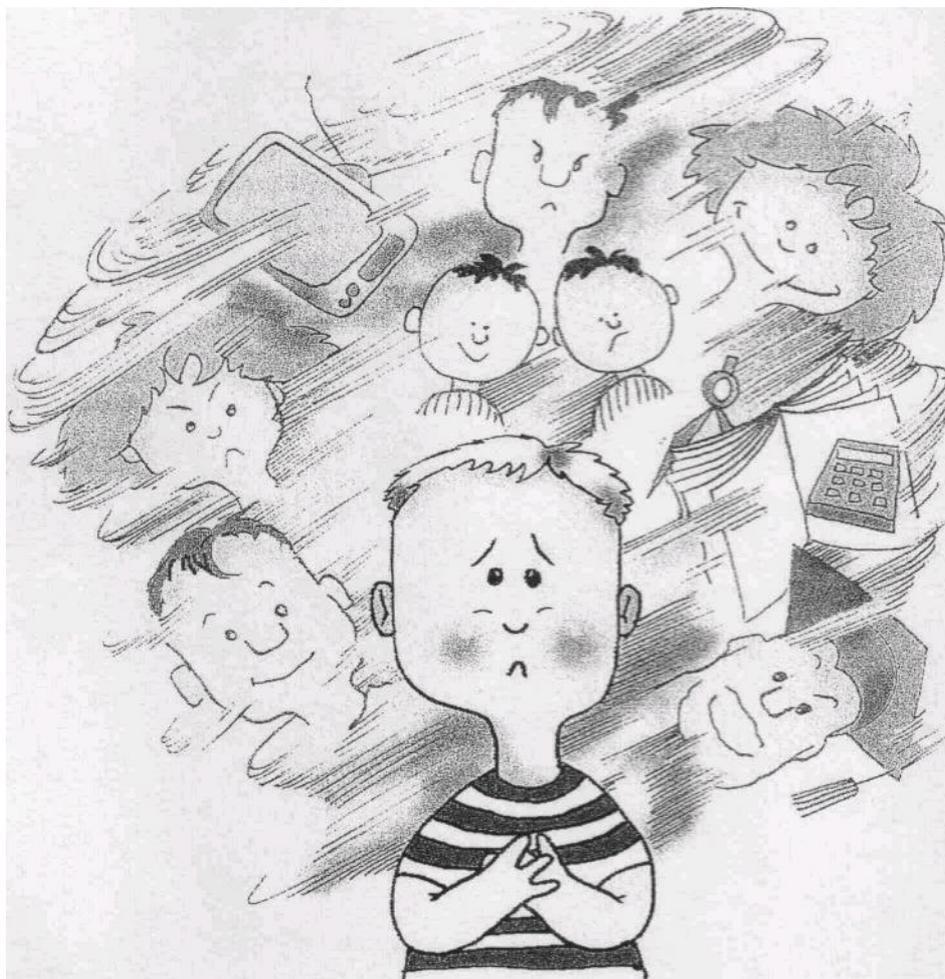


BRAIN GYMNASTICS



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A Wakeup Call for the Brain

What is Brain Gym?

Brain gym is a series of exercises that enables the brain to work at its best. The techniques are a composite of many differing sciences based upon neurobiology predominantly. It has been found to facilitate learning in learning-disabled children. However, the results of using brain gym have proven to be highly effective for all learners, and they have also been shown to improve performance in all types of learners and for all types of activities. There is even evidence that brain gym can be used in psychological disorders as well.

Why use Brain Gym?

Teachers will find that these exercises enhance student performance before test taking in particular, but they also work before listening to lectures and studying. Just taking a few extra minutes to remind the students to do brain gym can yield impressive scores. It is worth it for everyone to take a few moments to do a brain gym exercise. It works really well for stress, I have found. If I have been stressing over a deadline and had a raging headache, or I have been looking at a computer for too long, I take a moment to get a glass of water and do the ‘brain buttons’. It immediately erases my headache and I have lots of energy to keep going.

How does it work?

The best answer to this question is to read what Caria Hannaford, Ph.D. has to say in ‘Smart Moves’. She is a neurophysiologist and educator with more than 28 years of teaching experience. She states that our bodies are very much a part of all our learning, and learning is not an isolated ‘brain’ function. Every nerve and cell is a network contributing to our intelligence and our learning capability. She says “movement activates the neural wiring throughout the body, making the whole body the instrument of learning”. Caria states that “sensation” forms the basis of concepts from which “thinking” evolves.

The brain is a wonderful organ

Another feature of the human organism that is significant in organising the brain gym exercises is our bi-cameral brain. The brain has a right and left hemisphere, each one doing certain distinct tasks. Often one side of our brain works more than the other side, depending on the

tasks we are doing or how we have developed as human beings. If the two brains are working fully and sharing information across the Corpus Collosum, then there is a balance of brain function. Without this balance, there is always going to be something that is not fully understood or remembered. Brain gym assists us to integrate the two brains, which gives us our full capacity for problem solving or learning.

The importance of water

We are also “electrical” beings and our brain’s neurons work by electrical connections. Water has been found to be the best thing we can do to facilitate the thinking process because of its capacity to conduct electricity and assist cell function. As Caria Hannaford says, “water comprises more of the brain (with estimates of 90%) than of any other organ in the body”. Thus a simple drink of water before a test or before going to class can have a profound effect on our brain’s readiness to work. Unfortunately, coffee or soda will have the opposite effect since these will upset the electrolytes in the brain. In all, then the exercises that you see here are designed to make us a whole-brain learner.

Here are some simple but effective ways to wake-up the brain and get it all working at once and optimally.

1. Drink a glass of water.

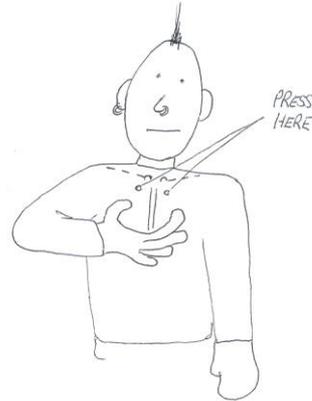


2. Brain Buttons

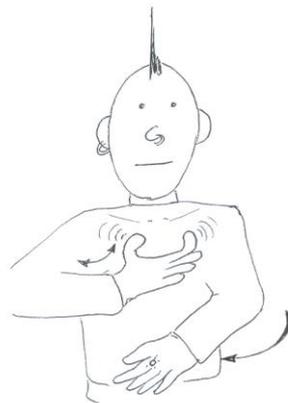
- Put one hand so that there is as wide a space as possible between the thumb and index finger



- Then place the index finger and thumb into the slight indentations below the collar bone on each side of the sternum. Press slightly in a pulsing manner.

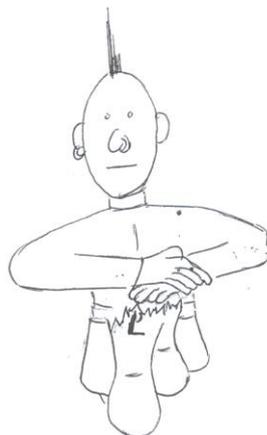


- At the same time put the other hand over the navel area of the stomach. Gently press on these points for about two minutes.



3. Cross crawl

- You can stand or sit for this. Put the right elbow across the body to the left knee as you raise it, then do the same thing for the left elbow to the right knee, just as if you were marching.



- Just do this, either sitting or standing, for about two minutes.

4. Hook-ups

- Sit up for this activity and cross the right leg over the left at the ankles

