

## **Brain Bites - Lazy 8's Make Transitions Great! September 2009**

Category – Stress free Transitions

**It is amazing how children know what they need and then begin to support themselves when given the right tools.**

My son has Autism, and has just completed grade one. In January this year he moved to a new school that was able to support his learning and behavior needs in the classroom.

Change can be difficult and cause stress for most people, no matter their age. I was amazed at how insightful he was with knowing what he needed in order to make this a successful transition to his new school.

My business partner, Jill Hewlett and I are licensed Brain Gym® Instructors. Our company, Brain Works Global Inc., trains and empowers individuals on how they can reduce stress, and optimize the use of their whole brain potential in daily life activities, through the use of Brain Gym® integrative movements.

**In our experience, many children, especially those with Autism, hold a great deal of anxiety and stress, particularly during periods of transition from one activity or environment to another. As well, for children like my son, being required to sit still for extended periods of time. Such heightened levels of stress tend to obstruct any meaningful learning and connection.**

My son requires regular assisted and independent movement breaks to nourish his sensory integration needs. In school, during carpet time, my son would have difficulties sitting for the required 20 minute period without losing his ability to self regulate. As a strategy, his teacher would do Lazy 8's on his back to support his attending skills as well as a sensory support for proprioception. (Proprioception = Where we sense our body is in relation to the surrounding environment)

Doing the "Lazy 8's" (infinity sign) or having it traced on ones body, has been used in educational therapy to develop kinesthetic and tactile awareness in students with severe learning problems. Used today as part of the Brain Gym® menu, it helps people of all ages and skill level improve reading, writing, communication, comprehension skills, memory, attention to details, vision, balance and focus.

My son's teacher rarely had EA support available, although it was assigned to her classroom. Therefore, she could not always attend to my son's needs and still facilitate the curriculum as required.

**Thankfully the teacher knew Brain Gym® and during carpet time was able to use the quick, simple and effective Lazy 8's to support him.**

Of course, kids catch on to these things, they started noticing how my son's behavior shifted once the teacher began to do Lazy 8's on his back. Like, how he could go from not able to sit still, stay out of others personal space or self regulate, to being able to sit still, honor personal boundaries and experience more frequent regulation during carpet time.

One day when the teacher was busy during carpet time, one of his peers noticed that my son needed support and began to do Lazy 8's on his back. The result...he became regulated!!

From that point forward, doing lazy 8's on his back became an instinctual response by classmates when he needed it. For my son, there was no discussion about who was going to do it, it would just happen.

Months later, for various reasons, my son was invited to move to an integrated school so we leapt at the opportunity. As mentioned above, transitions cause stress and do not always come easy to children, especially children with Autism. So while the change of schools was positive, we wanted the transition to be as well.

**I initiated the “transition talk” with my son. I said, “Guess what? You get to go to a new school that teaches the way you learn, not all teachers know how to do this. We are so lucky to find a school that does. You get to keep your friends from your current school and you get to make a bunch of new friends”. He sat there for a while considering this and then said, “but mommy, who is going to rub my back?” This response brought tears to my eyes. Evidently, my son knew how much the Lazy 8's supported by his classmates and teacher had helped with transitions, self regulation, attending skills. He knew this same support would be needed for a successful experience by his teacher and classmates at the new school.**

If this was his primary concern I could not ask for any better an outcome. I was not worried because I knew the new school would be open to supporting him this way.

My son started at his new school and transitioned very successfully with lots of Lazy 8's among other support tools. We went back to his old school a few weeks later to visit the teacher and his friends. It turns out, once my son left, the kids kept doing the Lazy'8's, on each other during carpet time! **Just this one Brain Gym® movement has brought inclusivity and group cohesion to the class. I believe it also has provided a coping tool for his absence as he was missed from class.**

Children are amazingly intuitive and given the right tools they will naturally attend to their needs and the needs of others.

To hear the Audio version of my interview with CBC Radio which discussed how my experience was used with Transitioning and Autism go to; [CBC Radio interview with Sharon Todd](#)

Jill Hewlett and Sharon Todd are both Educational Kinesiologists and Licensed Brain Gym® Trainers. Their company, Brain Works Global Inc., train clients on how to maximize their learning potential while working in conjunction with their individual goals.

They provide keynotes, in house training, and sponsored events to a wide range of organizations, schools and the community. For more information go to <http://www.brainworksglobal.com> or call 905.830.6902.