

MY NEXT APPLICATION OF THE BRAIN GYM PROGRAM: A TOOL FOR FOOD ADDICTIONS

Colleen Small, Virginia, U.S.A.

Since receiving the Teaching through Movement award in 2006, I've continued my work with educators here in the largest school system in Virginia. When the teachers, assistants, physical therapists, occupational therapists, social workers, and administrators write comments, they express deep gratitude for the decades of work carried out by Paul and Gail Dennison. I continually hear them ask, "Why aren't the Brain Gym activities a part of beginning teacher training?"



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The Brain Gym program gives teachers and children a way to relax and release stress, and this is especially important since we now know that children entrain to the rhythms of their caregivers.

Parents clamor for literacy instruction for their children at earlier and earlier ages, when the youngsters are not developmentally ready. "Movement creates intelligence" is something I've heard Paul Dennison say, and it's a phrase I often quote when I consult with other educators searching for tools to share with these overeager parents.

I recently sat on a panel for parents and educators entitled "Can Preschoolers Get Depressed?" The teachers wanted to know techniques to assist this age group of often "shy, socially immature" or "overactive" two-to-five-year-olds. I find that the Brain Gym theories and activities are easily integrated into preschool classrooms. For just one example, some classrooms now provide rocking chairs to stimulate calf muscles in a modified version of the Footflex.

MOVEMENT CAN ADDRESS COMPULSIVE EATING

Along with the joy that comes from my work with special-needs students and with other educators, I'm feeling happy about completing a certification program in food addictions. In a similar regard, I was excited to see an article in the August 2009 *Brain Gym Journal* describing the use of Brain Gym with recovering addicts in Canada.

My experience has been that, as persons with eating compulsions recover, the need for them to get back in touch with their body makes the Brain Gym work a critical support. The activities help those overcoming food addictions to stay present, focused, and regulated while remaining open to achieving goals as their bodies reach a healthy weight.

Dennison Laterality Repatterning (usually abbreviated as

DLR*) is extremely useful to clients in helping them slow down so they can notice where they're holding stress. As their weight changes, even the different feeling of their body in motion may lead to stress. People can't make needed changes without personal awareness, and getting connected to one's sense of self is a particular benefit of DLR.

When I transition into retirement from the public school system, I'm looking forward to teaching the Brain Gym program as a tool for recovering food addicts and their families.

Colleen T. Small, M.Ed., is a special educator in Springfield, Virginia, licensed to teach Elementary Grades 1-7 and Specific Learning Disabilities in Grades K-12, as well as Early Childhood Special Education and Kindergarten. This Brain Gym® Instructor/ Consultant has been an adjunct professor for George Washington University and a guest lecturer at George Mason University. Colleen is the Director of Children's Programs for the International Society of Food Addiction Professionals, and assists in food addiction groups that allow safe places for detoxification from addictive foods. She can be reached at Colleen_Small@Verizon.net. Colleen received the Teaching through Movement Award in 2006. ▲