

BOOK REVIEW

YOU ARE A WINNER:

MOVEMENT'S ROLE IN TRAUMA

RECOVERY, BY SVETLANA MASGUTOVA

AND PAMELA CURLEE

INTERNATIONAL DR. SVETLANA MASGUTOVA

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You Are a Winner was written by two members of the Educational Kinesiology International Faculty, and is a moving account of the volunteer work of psychologist and neurokinesiologist Dr. Svetlana Masgutova with young trauma survivors following a national disaster in Russia.

Writing in collaboration with Pamela Curlee of the United States, Dr. Masgutova tells in her own words the story of her work at the Ural Hospital with pediatric burn victims who lived through a historic train catastrophe that occurred in 1989 in the Ural Mountains of Russia. Dr. Masgutova, who was at the time barely familiar with the Edu-K work, describes her use of several Brain Gym movements to help the children deal with the effects of shock, severe burns, pain, disfigurement, and the loss of family members, as well as with phobias regarding fire and the dark.

Within weeks of her arrival at the hospital, Svetlana was asked by the pediatric doctors to teach such Brain Gym activities as the Cross Crawl, the Double Doodle, Lazy 8s, and Hook-ups to all medical students and nursing staff, as well as to the one or two full-time personnel assigned as aides for each child. After teaching various Brain Gym movements to the staff members, Dr. Masgutova had them model these movements each time they approached a child's bed.

If the children were able to move, they would follow along in doing the Brain Gym activities, or would sometimes be assisted in motoring through the movements. If they could not move, they were encouraged to imagine doing the movements while watching staff members model the activities.

Medical records later showed that, in less than three weeks of beginning the activities, the death rate had begun to decrease in the wards where Brain Gym had been implemented and healing was occurring more quickly there.

In explaining the role of movement in trauma survival, Dr. Masgutova has noted, "Developmental movements such as the Brain Gym activities remind the body of primary strategies, all based on the security of survival. Some examples of primary strategies include body centering and straightening, as well as homologous, homolateral, and cross-lateral movement. Doing the Brain Gym activities supports these natural strategies, because these movements and exercises remind the body that it is safe and secure, thus allowing the incorporation of the new

information that is so crucial for the growth and development of the emotional and physical body.

“These natural developmental movements actually allow people of any age to access inner resources and wisdom so they can literally and metaphorically *draw out* their own growth and development. These natural movements provide motivation for recovery because they reactivate the primary experience of sensory and motor integration. This state of physical integration creates a foundation of safety upon which learning can take place.”

In his foreword for the book, Brain Gym cofounder Paul Dennison says: “In this book, Masgutova and Curlee offer us a remarkable account of how children experiencing severe trauma learned to use the power of movement to define and redefine themselves beyond their commonplace senses. It is also the story of one person’s vision to see beyond the circumstances of the visible and the apparent—beyond pain, horror and suffering—and into the hearts of the young and their unseen possibilities. And it is a story of courage in the face of grief and loss, the courage to draw out the emerging individual in each child by trusting natural movement to activate the brain and neuropathways beyond survival and toward growth.”

Dr. Masgutova’s breakthrough work using the natural developmental movements of Brain Gym with these children shows how addressing the body’s reflex to protect itself in crisis must be integrated for psychological healing to progress beyond survival.

Svetlana describes how she saw for herself extraordinary evidence of the restorative benefits of the Brain Gym movements, and how her experience working with the survivors of the accident significantly changed her professional and personal life. In the years since 1989 she has completed extensive research on the use of the Brain Gym movements with children and adults, has published more than seventy articles in Russia and Poland on the developmental effects of the Brain Gym activities and

the benefits of reflex integration programs, and has established numerous Brain Gym centers in Russia and Poland.

More recently, Dr. Masgutova has developed out of this seminal work the field of NeuroKinesiology™ and the Masgutova Method™, based on her findings of the importance of awakening and integrating the dynamic and postural infant and lifelong reflexes.

This book is an important resource, not only for Brain Gym® Instructors and other educators who are interested in the role of movement in the process of recovery from severe physical or emotional distress, but also for anyone working with trauma survivors.

You Are a Winner is available for purchase through the International Dr. Svetlana Masgutova Institute™, Warsaw, Poland, <www.Masgutovamethod.com>, or <www.BrainGym.com>. 109 pages; softbound; \$17

