



Using Movement to Integrate the Brain

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Brain Gym® is ...

a brilliant synthesis of physical activities that help children and adults change old, ineffective patterns of learning and behavior by developing neurological brain integration. The activities assist individuals in improving reading, comprehension, listening, memory and focus. Brain Gym also assists those with challenges of fetal alcohol syndrome, dyslexia, ADD and ADHD. Paul Dennison, PhD, an expert in child motor development, developed this program. It is based upon years of research by educational therapists, developmental optometrists, and other developmental specialists.

Brain Gym® consists of simple movements similar to the movements that children do naturally during their first three years of life to accomplish important developmental steps for coordination of eyes, ears, hands and the whole body. The Brain Gym® movements have been shown over years of clinical experience, in field studies, and in published research reports, to prepare children with the physical skills they need in order to learn to read, write, and otherwise function effectively in the classroom. The ability to learn easily is especially important for children in the first years of school, when they are laying the foundation for their future schooling and adult life work.

In 1990, the National Learning foundation, an organization created in response to the Action Plan of the White House Task Force on Innovative Learning, selected Brain Gym® as one of the “twelve exemplary programs that model excellence in the classroom and have demonstrated effective results.” It has since been selected annually.

How does it Work?

Briefly, Brain Gym® works by facilitating achievement of optimal mental potential. Brain Gym® promotes efficient communication among the many nerve cells and functional centers located throughout the brain and body. Blocks in learning occur when information cannot flow freely through these centers. The Brain Gym® movements stimulate this flow of information within the brain and body, freeing our innate ability to learn and function at top efficiency.

Three Dimensions

Dr. Paul Dennison describes brain functioning in terms of three dimensions—focus, centering, and laterality.

Focus is the ability to coordinate the back and front parts of the brain. It is related to participation and comprehension, the ability to act on the details of a situation while keeping a perspective of the self and understanding new information in the context of all previous experience. People without this skill are said to have attention disorders and an inability to comprehend.

Centering is the ability to coordinate the top and bottom parts of the brain. This skill is related to organization and to feeling and expressing emotions and the ability to respond clearly without emotional overlay, being grounded, and feeling safe and relaxed.

Laterality is the ability to coordinate one side of the brain with the other, especially in the midfield. This skill is fundamental to the ability to read, write, and communicate. It is also essential for fluid whole-body movements, and for the ability to move and think at the same time.

The Benefits of Brain Gym®

Brain Gym® movements integrate (connect) the brain in these dimensions, allowing information to flow easily from the senses into memory and out again. This enables a person to learn with less stress, and express his/her own creativity and clear the emotional stress that is so frequently associated with learning problems.

Benefits include improvements in learning, expression and movement abilities in children and adults. Teachers typically report improvements in attitude, attention, homework performance, discipline and the general behavior of the entire class.