

Nurturing Kids' Hearts and Souls

Maggie Dent

Dr George Halasz is a Melbourne psychiatrist who has worked with children and adolescents for over 25 years. He explains that the number of psychiatric diagnoses for childhood conditions has soared in the last two decades, increasing from about 70 conditions to more than 400. What this means is that “what was once considered within the bounds of normal is now treated as an illness requiring a cure, which more often than not comes in the form of medication”. P 13



Notion of competitive parenting

“What a child really needs is good, positive emotional relationships with parents and others. They don’t need a thousand activities. Children can learn facts and gain external skills at any time. But they only gain relationship skills when young.”

Ruth Schmidt Neven, Director of the Centre for Child and Family Development, Melbourne. Parents' Magazine, November 2004, p18.

Key positive attributes for early brain development

1. Bonding and attachment with a consistent, nurturing care provider, especially for the first five years of life
2. A caring and supportive environment that maximises love and limits and minimizes harmful stressors
3. Whole body integration through movement and play as the primary modes of learning
4. Nurturing and encouragement of the imagination
5. Attending to emotional development as a key focus to build healthy independence, social competency and higher intelligence
6. A comprehensive use of the arts and music, central to the learning process, especially story telling, singing, painting, drawing, dancing and movement to music
7. Encouraging lightness and laughter in learning and life - allowing children to be children!
8. Time for silence and stillness, with pauses in children's lives so their brains can effectively process rapid new learning and integrate meaning for themselves
9. Involvement in routine authentic tasks to encourage problem solving, critical thinking, creativity and development of meaning

10. A sense of connectedness - personally, interpersonally, globally and with something beyond the self
11. Opportunities for self transcendence

Joseph Chilton Pearce believes that,

“the growth of the prefrontals [part of the brain] is determined by mother-infant interactions in the first eighteen months or so after birth and the prefrontals are critical to all higher intelligence and to transcendence itself.”

(The Biology of Transcendence, 2002, p134).

Remember two of the key characteristics of teenage murderers in the US were “ignored as children, deprived of play activity in early childhood.” P 51



Brain research identifies a period of time in a child’s development where if they miss out on gentle, loving and stimulating relationships, as with parents or pets, they do not develop an ability to be caring or empathetic.



“When an infant receives too little direct loving contact, this causes the area of his brain that regulates emotion, self image and beliefs about relationship to become atrophied, with serious, long-lasting – often permanent – consequences for behaviour. Touch deprivation releases steroids that damage the hippocampus leading to cognitive and behavioural problems later in life.”

Robin Grille, Parenting for a Peaceful World 2005, p232.

An excellent book that explains how to fill your child’s love cup is The Five Love Languages of Children by Gary Chapman and Ross Campbell.

NB: Attunement with children

Three reasons for inappropriate behaviour in children are as follows.

1. The child is experiencing a need, where unrecognised and unmet needs can cause children to act 'badly'. Needs may be around food, sleep, thirst, touch, affection, recognition or acceptance. An unmet need is often linked to a perception of a lack of love.
2. The child has insufficient information to make a better decision, being mindful of misinformation or misinterpretation. Always remember that children are interpreting the world through their own eyes, not an adult's.
3. The child is harbouring painful, pent-up feelings that need to be expressed in a harmless way. This is what we call emotional discharge or diffusing.

Aletha Solter



Every stage of a child's growth and development brings gifts and challenges that need to be embraced rather than overcome.

NB: Healing Potential of

- ❖ Breath work
- ❖ Imagination
- ❖ Safe touch
- ❖ Positive enhancing language
- ❖ Being present
- ❖ Being heard
- ❖ Nurturing the creativity
- ❖ Nurturing their imagination
- ❖ Nurturing their intuition
- ❖ Building supportive networks "family" "community"
- ❖ Encouraging character
- ❖ Building social skills – manners, respect for others, etc
- ❖ Pets and animals

- ❖ Use of fantasy and imaginary literature, film and storytelling
- ❖ Kindness, compassion and connection

Children yearn to have practices and language that allow them to feel there is a benevolent power greater than themselves -albeit God, in their life - somewhere."

Caroline Myss



Importance of prayer for young children

Importance of silence and stillness and spaces to just be

Spiritual Intelligence includes simplicity, laughter, lightness, reverence, respect, contemplation, listening with the heart, calmness, awe, wonder and relational spirituality.

Maggie Dent www.maggiedent.com quietly improving lives. 2006