Teaching To Students’ “Learning Styles”: A Myth Busted?

SOURCE CREDIT: Is Teaching to a Student’s “Learning Style” a Bogus Idea? Many researchers have suggested that differences in students’ learning styles may be as important as ability, but empirical evidence is thin: By Sophie Guterl Scientific American Sept 20 2013

ARE THERE INDIVIDUAL LEARNING STYLES? Students are adamant they learn best visually or by hearing a lesson or by reading, and so forth. And while some educators advocate teaching methods that take advantage of differences in the way students learn, some psychologists take issue with the idea that learning style makes any significant difference in the classroom. Image: Alexander Iwan/Flickr

Ken Gibson was an advanced reader in elementary school and easily retained much of what he read. But when the teacher would stand him up in front of the class to read a report out loud, he floundered. His classmates, he noticed, also had their inconsistencies. Some relished oral presentations but took forever to read a passage on their own; others had a hard time following lectures. Gibson now explains these discrepancies as “learning styles” that differ from one student to the next. He founded a company, LearningRx, on the premise that these styles make a difference in how students learn.

The idea that learning styles vary among students has taken off in recent years. Many teachers, parents and students are adamant that they learn best visually or by hearing a lesson or by reading, and so forth. And some educators have advocated teaching methods that take advantage of differences in the way students learn. But some psychologists take issue with the idea that learning style makes any significant difference in the classroom.

There is no shortage of ideas in the professional literature. David Kolb of Case Western Reserve University posits that personality divides learners into categories based on how actively or observationally they learn and whether they thrive on abstract concepts or concrete ones. Another conjecture holds that sequential learners understand information best when it is presented one step at a time whereas holistic learners benefit more from seeing the big picture. Psychologists have published at least 71 different hypotheses on learning styles.

Frank Caffield, professor of education at the University of London, set out to find commonalities among the many disparate ideas about learning style using a sample comprising 13 models. The findings, published in 2004, found that only three tests for learning styles met their criteria for both validity and reliability, meaning that the tests both measured what they intended to measure and yielded consistent results. Among the many competing ideas, Caffield and his colleagues found no sign pointing to an overarching model of learning styles.

In 2002 Gibson, after a brief career as a pediatric optometrist, started LearningRx, a nontraditional tutoring organization, based on the idea that different people rely on particular cognitive skills that are strongest. For instance, visual learners understand lessons best when they are presented via images or a slide show; auditory learners benefit more from lectures; kinesthetic learners prefer something concrete, such as building a diorama. “We have a natural tendency to use the skills that are strongest,” Gibson says. “That becomes our learning style.”

LearningRx trainers use cognitive skill assessments similar to IQ tests to identify a student’s areas of cognitive strengths and weaknesses—some people might be strong at memorizing written words or weak at doing mathematical computations in...
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everybody, then you're done."

Looking at a map instead of verbally describing the shape and relative location of South America, the most effective way to do so across the board would be by a lesson," he says. For example, if the goal is to teach students the geography of the students, that ought to be the determinant of how the teacher is going to present it.

When teachers wonder how to present a lesson to kids with a range of abilities, they may not find the answer in established learning style approaches. Instead, they administer “brain training” exercises designed to improve students’ weakest skills. Such exercises might involve a trainer asking a student to quickly answer a series of math problems in his head.

Daniel Willingham, a professor of cognitive psychology at the University of Virginia and outspoken skeptic of learning styles, argues that Gibson and other cognitive psychologists are mistaken in equate cognitive strengths with learning styles. The two, Willingham says, are different: Whereas cognitive ability clearly affects the ability to learn, an individual’s style doesn’t. “You can have two basketball players, for example, with a different style. One is very conservative whereas the other is a real risk-taker and likes to take crazy shots and so forth, but they might be equivalent in ability.”

As Willingham points out, the idea that ability affects performance in the classroom is not particularly surprising. The more interesting question is whether learning styles, as opposed to abilities, make a difference in the classroom. Would educators be more effective if they identified their students’ individual styles and catered their lessons to them?

The premise should be testable, Willingham says. "The prediction is really straightforward: If you appeal to a person’s style versus going against his preferred style, that should make a difference for learning outcomes," he says.

Harold Pashler of the University of California, San Diego, and his colleagues searched the research literature for exactly this kind of empirical evidence. They couldn’t find any. One study they reviewed compared participants’ scores on the Verbalizer–Visualizer Questionnaire, a fifteen-item survey of true-or-false questions evaluating whether someone prefers auditory or optical information, with their scores on memory tests after presenting words via either pictures or verbal reading. On average, participants performed better on the free-recall test when they were shown images, regardless of their preferences.

Some studies claimed to have demonstrated the effectiveness of teaching to learning styles, although they had small sample sizes, selectively reported data or were methodologically flawed. Those that were methodologically sound found no relationship between learning styles and performance on assessments. Willingham and Pashler believe that learning styles is a myth perpetuated merely by sloppy research and confirmation bias.

Despite the lack of empirical evidence for learning styles, Gibson continues to think of ability and preference as being one and the same. Trainers at LearningRx ask their clients to describe their weaknesses, then measure their cognitive abilities using the Woodcock–Johnson Test. “Just by someone telling us what’s easy and hard for them, we can pretty well know where the deficiencies are,” he says. “Eighty-five to 90 percent of the time the symptoms and the test results are right on.”

When teachers wonder how to present a lesson to kids with a range of abilities, they may not find the answer in established learning style approaches. Instead, Willingham suggests keeping it simple. “It’s the material, not the differences among the students, that ought to be the determinant of how the teacher is going to present a lesson,” he says. For example, if the goal is to teach students the geography of South America, the most effective way to do so across the board would be by looking at a map instead of verbally describing the shape and relative location of each country. “If there’s one terrific way that captures a concept for almost everybody, then you’re done.”
Moods Normal?

Just Moody Or More? Are Your Child's

Some kids are constantly irritable and angry, says Duby. Kids may head to their room after school and not emerge until morning. Not being able to sleep or sleeping more than usual. “They may withdraw socially,”

Depression may cause similar symptoms to anxiety with headaches, stomachaches, trouble breathing and feel their heart racing. At its most extreme, anxiety induces panic attacks. Kids break into sweats, have difficulty breathing and feel their heart racing.

Any sort of reasoning—like the suggestion to wear a wedding-worthy yellow dress—won’t work. Frustrations explode into shouting, timeouts and all-too-familiar rants of “this family sucks,” followed by heartbreaking rounds of “I hate myself!”

The next morning, when nerves calm, the yellow dress is perfectly fine and our daughter cheerfully chatters about Belle’s ball gown in Beauty and the Beast.

It’s taken years of keen observation and research, plus the support of educators and psychologists to help our kids, ages 9 to 13, cope with mental health issues that also include Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder (ADHD) and depression.

Recognizing that something isn’t right and pursuing help isn’t an easy journey. But it’s necessary. In the same way you’d pursue cures and solutions to manage chronic physical conditions like cancer and diabetes for your child, you have to advocate for your child’s emotional well-being. It requires being proactive, persistent and patient.

“If you can intervene early and get proper treatment, the prognosis is so much better,” says Teri Brister, who directs the basic education program of the National Alliance on Mental Illness.

KNOW THE SIGNS

“One of the most difficult-to-recognize issues is anxiety,” says John Duby, director of Akron Children’s Hospitals Division of Developmental and Behavioral Pediatrics. “(Children) won’t say, ‘Hey, you know, I’m worried.’ You have to be tuned in.”

All-consuming worries—about parents’ safety, bullies or natural disasters, for instance—can look like a lack of focus at first. Some kids ask frequent questions about “what’s next” for meals or activities. Changes to the daily routine (a substitute teacher or a visit to a new doctor) can trigger headaches, stomachaches or a sleepless night.

At its most extreme, anxiety induces panic attacks. Kids break into sweats, have trouble breathing and feel their heart racing.

Depression may cause similar symptoms to anxiety with headaches, stomachaches, not being able to sleep or sleeping more than usual. “They may withdraw socially,” says Duby. Kids may head to their room after school and not emerge until morning. Some kids are constantly irritable and angry.
“We often think depression doesn’t happen in children, but it does,” he says.

GET HELP

Step 1: Trust your instincts

If you’re worried about your child’s mood, trust your instincts as a parent, recommends Brister.

The red flags of mental health disorders tend to pop up during school years when children have to navigate academic expectations, make friends and increase responsibilities at home.

“You have to look for (behavior) patterns,” says Brister. These can include impulsive acts, hyperactivity, outbursts, an inability to follow directions or recurring ailments that may impair how the child performs in class, extracurricular activities or simply sitting through dinner with the family.

Most concerned parents start with a visit to the pediatrician. The family physician can help you analyze symptoms and understand whether there might be an underlying condition such as food allergies or a chronic lack of sleep.

Step 2: Seek professional help

(PETER’S EDIT For Australian parents your family GP is a good place to start) The family physician can help you analyze symptoms and understand whether there might be an underlying condition such as food allergies or a chronic lack of sleep.

When our son was 5, we sought testing for ADHD with a referral from our pediatrician. Unfortunately, we couldn’t even get on a waiting list for a psychology appointment. We were told the list had backed up to a two-year wait, so it was eliminated. We had to call weekly and hope for an opening.

When our daughter needed help as her anxiety escalated, it took a school district triage nurse to get us an appointment with a psychiatric nurse.

This is, unfortunately, not an uncommon scenario for parents. You need to use all the leverage you have to access experts in the school system or mental health clinics to help with your situation. Stay persistent and be pleasant rather than pushy.

And when you do get an appointment, make the most of it by consistently tracking the concerns you have about your child’s behavior and putting them in writing for the physician to read. Have a list of questions ready, and always ask about additional resources you can tap into, from support groups to books.

Mental health practitioners will also be gathering resources and information about your child from report cards, checklists and questionnaires. These can help pinpoint whether a child has anxiety, depression, ADHD, bipolar disorder, is on the autism spectrum or may have a combination of these. “It allows us to have a more objective view,” says Duby.

Step 3: Find your normal

Once there is a diagnosis, families can decide how to move forward. That might mean trying medications, working with a psychologist or setting up an Individualized Education Program (IEP) at school.

Additional services that may help include occupational therapy, which can identify specific movements, such as swinging, spinning or brushing outer limbs with a soft brush that may help your child’s brain process and integrate sensory information.

These tools and approaches can help families be proactive about preventing and managing mental meltdowns. It’s also essential to help children feel a sense of belonging at school and in community groups. Families need to build up their children’s strengths so they have the self-esteem and confidence to move forward, says Duby.

And parents should stay on top of the situation, watching for changes in behavior and mood, especially as children get older, says Brister.

Hormones may help or worsen conditions, which makes it important to have a diagnosis and support network before the teen years hit.

“I can’t emphasize enough how essential it is to recognize symptoms early and treat them,” she says.

SIGNS OF DEPRESSION AND ANXIETY
How to know if your child has a mental health problem

Signs in children may differ from the symptoms we commonly associate with adults who have the disorders. Depression in kids may look like irritability, anger and self-criticism, says the National Alliance on Mental Illness. It could be as subtle as her making less eye contact with you than in the past.

School performance is another important indicator. Grades can drop off dramatically; students may also visit the school nurse more frequently with vague complaints of illness.

Children who suffer from an anxiety disorder may experience fear, nervousness and shyness, according to the Anxiety and Depression Association of America. They may worry excessively about things like grades and relationships with family and friends. They may strive for perfection and seek constant approval.

HOW TO CALM IT DOWN

Whether a child has mental health struggles or not, emotions inevitably boil over—especially as preteen dramas escalate. Here are ways to help de-escalate the situation and restore calm to your family life.

• Keep your body language non-threatening and stay as even-keeled as possible. Don’t get in the child’s face or use a raised voice.
• Teach kids how to breathe slowly through the nose, then exhale gently through the mouth as if cooling a hot bowl of soup.
• Create an “away space,” a place to cool down and take a break. Consider a quiet nook in a bedroom, a spot on the stairs for kids who don’t like separation or a backyard corner for those who find comfort in nature.
• Let kids know they can’t hit others, but it’s OK to punch a pillow or punching bag or to squeeze putty or a squishy toy.
• Figure out what’s physically comforting—feeling the softness of a blanket or stuffed animal, nuzzling the fur of a family pet or piling under heavy blankets.
• Listen to favorite tunes on a music player.
• Provide a journal for writing out frustrations or doodling when the words won’t come.
• When emotions simmer down, sit side by side to talk through how the situation could have been handled differently and work on solutions together.

ONLINE RESOURCES

(PETER’S EDIT: AUSTRALIA:

**HeadSpace**: headspace National Youth Mental Health Foundation Ltd is funded by the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing under the Youth Mental Health Initiative Program. A great resource for parents and teens.

**BeyondBlue**: Resources for young people section)

OTHER:

**HealthyChildren.org** from the American Academy of Pediatrics has a section dedicated to “Emotional Problems.” Parents can tap into great information on how to help their child. Audio segments recorded by experts in the field can be used as a launching point for family discussions.

**TheBalancedMindFoundation.org**, founded by the mother of a daughter with bipolar disorder, provides help for families. Online, private support groups offer 24/7 support and online forums are a way for parents to connect.

**WorryWiseKids.org**, a service of the Children’s and Adult Center for OCD and Anxiety, has a wealth of information about the different types of anxiety disorders children can have, how to understand them and how to seek treatment for them.

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Source Credit:


"For some people social anxiety is pretty pervasive," said Justin Weeks, Ph.D., an assistant professor of psychology and director of the Center for Evaluation and Treatment of Anxiety at Ohio University. For others, the anxiety arises in specific social situations, he said.

The most common example is anxiety over public speaking. Making small talk, eating in front of others and using public restrooms also can trigger worry and unease for some.

Some people engage in what Weeks called "covert avoidance." For example, they might go to parties but instead of mingling, they hang back in the kitchen, he said.

Social anxiety is defined as anxiety anticipating a social situation or anxiety during or after that situation, Weeks said. "At the heart of social anxiety is the fear of evaluation." And it's not just negative evaluation that people worry about; it's positive evaluation, too.

Weeks's research suggests that people perceive negative consequences from a social situation whether they do poorly or well. (Here's one study.) For instance, people who do well at work might worry about the social repercussions of outshining their coworkers, he said.

In other words, people with social anxiety simply don't want to stand out. "They want to be as inconspicuous as possible."

Anxiety about social situations lies on a spectrum. "The consensus among the experts is that shyness and social anxiety disorder are all part of one continuum," Weeks said. "It's a question of severity."

How much does social anxiety interfere with your life?

For instance, you might wish that you were more comfortable when interacting with people, Weeks said. But "you don't feel like it's holding you back," in terms of your personal or professional goals.

"Social anxiety is more severe." A person might avoid going to college because schools require passing a public speaking course and interacting with new people. They might want a romantic relationship but worry so much about rejection that they avoid potential partners.

Below, Weeks shared his suggestions for overcoming social anxiety.


Self-help manuals are designed to supplement therapy, but they're also good tools for working on your own, Weeks said. He suggested the Managing Social...
Anxiety workbook. (PETER'S NOTE: For Teens I highly recommend *The Shyness and Social Anxiety Workbook for Teens: CBT and ACT Skills to Help You Build Social Confidence*)

2. Work with a therapist.

If social anxiety is stopping you from doing things you want or need to do, or you haven’t had much success with self-help, seek professional help. Find a therapist who specializes in anxiety disorders. You can start your search here.

3. Practice deep breathing every day.

It’s helpful to engage in deep breathing before an anxiety-provoking social situation, Weeks said. But practice this technique every day. This way it becomes second nature, and you don’t hyperfocus on deep breathing and miss an entire conversation, he said. Here’s more on deep breathing.

4. Create an exposure hierarchy.

An exposure hierarchy is a list – akin to a ladder – where you write down situations that cause you anxiety, in order of severity. Then you perform the easiest behavior, and keep moving up the list.

To create your own hierarchy, list 10 anxiety-provoking situations, and rate them on a 100-point scale (zero being no anxiety; 100 being severe anxiety). Your list might start with asking a stranger for directions and end with joining Toastmasters.

This website features a link to various worksheets on coping with social anxiety, and includes "the fear and avoidance hierarchy." (Look for "managing social anxiety: workbook").

5. Create objective goals.

People tend to disqualify the positive when they feel anxious, Weeks said. They might do well, even great, but because of their anxious feelings, they see their performance as abysmal. That’s why therapists encourage clients to create objective behavioral goals, he said.

These are behaviors that anyone in the room would be able to observe. It doesn’t matter how you feel or whether you’re blushing or sweating (which you can’t control anyway) in a social situation.

For instance, if you’re working in a group setting, the objective behavior would be to make three comments, Weeks said.

This also gives you a good barometer for judging your progress. Again, you’re not focusing on whether you felt nervous. Rather, you’re focusing on whether you performed the actual behavior.

Also, avoid focusing on others’ reactions. It doesn’t matter how your colleagues received your idea in the meeting. What matters is that you actually spoke up. It doesn’t matter whether a girl or guy said yes to your dinner invite. What matters is that you actually asked. It doesn’t matter how your child’s teacher reacted when you declined to volunteer for yet another school trip. What matters is that you were assertive and respected your own needs.

As Weeks said, “You did what you wanted to in a situation. We can’t control what another person is going to do.”


Dispute both bleak thoughts that undermine your performance and fuel your anxiety, and equally unrealistic thoughts that are irrationally positive,
For instance, if you're giving a speech, you might initially think, “I'm going to bomb.” But if you've given speeches before and done well, then this isn't a rational or realistic perspective. You might say instead, “I've given speeches before. I'm prepared, and I'll give it my best shot.”

If you're asking someone out, it's not rational to think, “They're definitely going to say yes.” But it is rational to consider, “They might,” according to Weeks.

If social anxiety is sabotaging your goals and stopping you from living the life you want, seek help and try the above strategies. Social anxiety is highly treatable, Weeks said. You can get better, and grow in the process.

MythBusters: The Human Brain Edition

Source Credit: 7 Myths About the Brain
Separating Fact From Fiction
By Kendra Cherry, About.com Guide

The human brain is amazing and sometimes mysterious. While researchers are still uncovering the secrets of how the brain works, they have discovered plenty of information about what goes on inside your noggin. Unfortunately, there are still a lot of brain myths out there.

The following are just a few of the many myths about the brain.

Myth 1: You only use 10 percent of your brain.

You've probably heard this oft-cited bit of information several times, but constant repetition does not make it any more accurate. People often use this popular urban legend to imply that the mind is capable of much greater things, such as dramatically increased intelligence, psychic abilities, or even telekinesis. After all, if we can do all the things we do using only 10 percent of our brains, just imagine what we could accomplish if we used the remaining 90 percent.

Reality check: Research suggests that all areas of the brain perform some type of function. If the 10 percent myth were true, brain damage would be far less likely – after all, we would really only have to worry about that tiny 10 percent of our brains being injured. The fact is that damage to even a small area of the brain can result in profound consequences to both cognition and functioning. Brain imaging technologies have also demonstrated that the entire brain shows levels of activity, even during sleep.

"It turns out though, that we use virtually every part of the brain, and that [most of] the brain is active almost all the time. Let’s put it this way: the brain represents three percent of the body’s weight and uses 20 percent of the body's energy.” – Neurologist Barry Gordon of Johns Hopkins School of Medicine, Scientific
Myth 2: Brain damage is permanent.

The brain is a fragile thing and can be damaged by things such as injury, stroke, or disease. This damage can result in a range of consequences, from mild disruptions in cognitive abilities to complete impairment. Brain damage can be devastating, but is it always permanent?

**Reality check:** While we often tend to think of brain injuries as lasting, a person’s ability to recover from such damage depends upon the severity and the location of the injury. For example, a blow to the head during a football game might lead to a concussion. While this can be quite serious, most people are able to recover when given time to heal. A severe stroke, on the other hand, can result in dire consequences to the brain that can very well be permanent.

However, it is important to remember that the human brain has an impressive amount of plasticity. Even following a serious brain event, such as a stroke, the brain can often heal itself over time and form new connections within the brain.

"Even after more serious brain injury, such as stroke, research indicates that — especially with the help of therapy — the brain may be capable of developing new connections and “reroute” function through healthy areas." – BrainFacts.org

Myth 3: People are either “right-brained” or “left-brained.”

Have you ever heard someone describe themselves as either left-brained or right-brained? This stems from the popular notion that people are either dominated by their right or left brain hemispheres. According to this idea, people who are "right-brained" tend to be more creative and expressive, while those who are "left-brained" tend to be more analytical and logical.

**Reality Check:** While experts do recognize that there is lateralization of brain function (that is, certain types of tasks and thinking tend to be more associated with a particular region of the brain), no one is fully right-brained or left-brained. In fact, we tend to do better at tasks when the entire brain is utilized, even for things that are typically associated with a certain area of the brain.

"No matter how lateralized the brain can get, though, the two sides still work together. The pop psychology notion of a left brain and a right brain doesn’t capture their intimate working relationship. The left hemisphere specializes in picking out the sounds that form words and working out the syntax of the words, for example, but it does not have a monopoly on language processing. The right hemisphere is actually more sensitive to the emotional features of language, tuning in to the slow rhythms of speech that carry intonation and stress." – Carl Zimmer, Discover

Myth 4: Humans have the biggest brains.

The human brain is quite large in proportion to body size, but another common misconception is that humans have the largest brains of any organism. How big is the human brain? How does it compare to other species?

**Reality Check:** The average adult has a brain weighing in at about three pounds and measuring up to about 15 centimeters in length. The largest animal brain belongs to that of a sperm whale, weighing in at a whopping 18 pounds! Another large-brained animal is the elephant, with an average brain size of around 11 pounds.

But what about relative brain size in proportion to body size? Humans must certainly have the largest brains in comparison to their body size, right? Once again, this notion is also a myth. Surprisingly, one animal that holds the largest body-size to brain ratios is the shrew, with a brain making up about 10 percent of its body mass.

“Our primate lineage had a head start in evolving large brains, however, because most primates have brains that are larger than expected for their body size. The Encephalization Quotient is a measure of brain size relative to body size. The cat has an EQ of about 1, which is what is expected for its body size, while chimps have an EQ of 2.5 and humans nearly 7.5. Dolphins, no slouches when it comes to cognitive powers and complex social groups, have an EQ of more than 5, but rats and rabbits are way down on the scale at below 0.4.” – Michael Balter, Slate.com

Myth 5: We are born with all the brain cells we ever have, and once they die, these cells are gone forever.

Traditional wisdom has long suggested that adults only have so many brain cells and that we never form new ones. Once these cells are lost, are they really gone for good?

**Reality Check:** In recent years, experts have discovered evidence that the human adult brain does indeed form new cells throughout life, even during old age. The
The process of forming new brain cells is known as neurogenesis and researchers have found that it happens in at least one important region of the brain called the hippocampus.

"Above-ground nuclear bomb tests carried out more than 50 years ago resulted in elevated atmospheric levels of the radioactive carbon-14 isotope (14C), which steadily declined over time. In a study published yesterday (June 7) in Cell, researchers used measurements of 14C concentration in the DNA of brain cells from deceased patients to determine the neurons' age, and demonstrated that there is substantial adult neurogenesis in the human hippocampus." – Dan Cossins, The Scientist

**Myth 6: Drinking alcohol kills brain cells.**

Partly related to the myth that we never grow new neurons is the idea that drinking alcohol can lead to cell death in the brain. Drink too much or too often, some people might warn, and you’ll lose precious brain cells that you can never get back. We’ve already learned that adults do indeed get new brain cells throughout life, but could drinking alcohol really kill brain cells?

**Reality Check:** While excessive or chronic alcohol abuse can certainly have dire health consequences, experts do not believe that drinking causes neurons to die. In fact, research has shown that even binge drinking doesn’t actually kill neurons.

“Scientific medical research has actually demonstrated that the moderate consumption of alcohol is associated with better cognitive (thinking and reasoning) skills and memory than is abstaining from alcohol. Moderate drinking doesn’t kill brain cells but helps the brain function better into old age. Studies around the world involving many thousands of people report this finding.” – PsychCentral.com

**Myth 7: There are 100 billion neurons in the human brain.**

If you’ve ever thumbed through a psychology or neuroscience textbook, you have probably read that the human brain contains approximately 100 billion neurons. How accurate is this oft-repeated figure? Just how many neurons are in the brain?

**Reality Check:** The estimate of 100 billion neurons has been repeated so often and so long that no one is completely sure where it originated. In 2009, however, one researcher decided to actually count neurons in adult brains and found that the number was just a bit off the mark. Based upon this research, it appears that the human brain contains closer to 85 billion neurons. So while the often-cited number is a few billion too high, 85 billion is still nothing to sneeze at.

“We found that on average the human brain has 86bn neurons. And not one [of the brains] that we looked at so far has the 100bn. Even though it may sound like a small difference the 14bn neurons amount to pretty much the number of neurons that a baboon brain has or almost half the number of neurons in the gorilla brain. So that’s a pretty large difference actually.” – Dr. Suzana Herculano-Houzel

More Psychology Facts and Myths:

**References**


Forget What You've Learnt About Learning

Source and authorship credit: Everything you thought you knew about learning is wrong Psychology Today
http://www.psychologytoday.com/

Everything You Thought You Knew About Learning Is Wrong How, and how NOT, to learn anything Published on January 28, 2012 by Garth Sundem in Brain Candy

Learning through osmosis didn't make the strategies list

Taking notes during class? Topic-focused study? A consistent learning environment? All are exactly opposite the best strategies for learning. Really, I recently had the good fortune to interview Robert Bjork, director of the UCLA Learning and Forgetting Lab, distinguished professor of psychology, and massively renowned expert on packing things in your brain in a way that keeps them from leaking out. And it turns out that everything I thought I knew about learning is wrong. Here's what he said.

First, think about how you attack a pile of study material.

"People tend to try to learn in blocks," says Bjork, "mastering one thing before moving on to the next." But instead he recommends interleaving, a strategy in which, for example, instead of spending an hour working on your tennis serve, you mix in a range of skills like backhands, volleys, overhead smashes, and footwork. "This creates a sense of difficulty," says Bjork, "and people tend not to notice the immediate effects of learning."

Instead of making an appreciable leap forward with yourserving ability after a session of focused practice, interleaving forces you to make nearly imperceptible...
steps forward with many skills.

But over time, the sum of these small steps is much greater than the sum of the leaps you would have taken if you’d spent the same amount of time mastering each skill in its turn.

Bjork explains that successful interleaving allows you to “seat” each skill among the others: “If information is studied so that it can be interpreted in relation to other things in memory, learning is much more powerful,” he says.

There’s one caveat: Make sure the mini skills you interleave are related in some higher-order way. If you’re trying to learn tennis, you’d want to interleave serves, backhands, volleys, smashes, and footwork—not serves, synchronized swimming, European capitals, and programming in Java.

Similarly, studying in only one location is great as long as you’ll only be required to recall the information in the same location. If you want information to be accessible outside your dorm room, or office, or nook on the second floor of the library, Bjork recommends varying your study location.

And again, these tips generalize. Interleaving and varying your study location will help whether you’re mastering math skills, learning French, or trying to become a better ballroom dancer.

So too will a somewhat related phenomenon, the spacing effect, first described by Hermann Ebbinghaus in 1885. “If you study and then you wait, tests show that the longer you wait, the more you will have forgotten,” says Bjork. That’s obvious—over time, you forget. But here’s the cool part:

If you study, wait, and then study again, the longer the wait, the more you’ll have learned after this second study session.

Bjork explains it this way: “When we access things from our memory, we do more than reveal it’s there. It’s not like a playback. What we retrieve becomes more retrievable in the future. Provided the retrieval succeeds, the more difficult and involved the retrieval, the more beneficial it is.” Note that there’s a trick implied by “provided the retrieval succeeds”: You should space your study sessions so that the information you learned in the first session remains just barely retrievable. Then, the more you have to work to pull it from the soup of your mind, the more this second study session will reinforce your learning. If you study again too soon, it’s too easy.

Along these lines, Bjork also recommends taking notes just after class, rather than during—forcing yourself to recall a lecture’s information is more effective than simply copying it from a blackboard. “Get out of court stenographer mode,” says Bjork. You have to work for it.

The more you work, the more you learn, and the more you learn, the more awesome you can become.

“Forget about forgetting,” says Robert Bjork.

“People tend to think that learning is building up something in your memory and that forgetting is losing the things you built.

But in some respects the opposite is true.” See, once you learn something, you never actually forget it. Do you remember your childhood best friend’s phone number? No? Well, Dr. Bjork showed that if you were reminded, you would retain it much more quickly and strongly than if you were asked to memorize a fresh seven-digit number. So this old phone number is not forgotten—it lives somewhere in you—only, recall can be a bit tricky.

And while we count forgetting as the sworn enemy of learning, in some ways that’s wrong, too. Bjork showed that the two live in a kind of symbiosis in which forgetting actually aids recall.

“Because humans have unlimited storage capacity, having total recall would be a mess,” says Bjork. “Imagine you remembered all the phone numbers of all the houses you had ever lived in. When someone asks you your current phone number, you would have to sort it from this long list.” Instead, we forget the old phone numbers, or at least bury them far beneath the ease of recall we gift to our current number. What you thought were sworn enemies are more like distant collaborators.

* Excerpted from Brain Trust: 93 Top Scientists Dish the Lab-Tested Secrets of Surfing, Dating, Dieting, Gambling, Growing Man-Eating Plants and More (Three Rivers Press, March 2012)

@garthsundem
Garth Sundem is the bestselling author of Brain Candy, Geek Logik, and The Geeks’ Guide to World Domination. more...
Fathers: What Does Recent Research Show?

Once again, in the lead up Fathers Day in Australia this Sunday, here is some information about some of the recent research on the role of fathers in parenting.

Credit: The Fatherhood Institute

Fathers and child development

Before we specifically look at fathers’ involvement in and influence on children’s education and learning, it’s important to understand fathers’ influence on the ‘whole child’, since characteristics such as self-esteem, self-regulation, self-efficacy and locus of control are emerging as key predictors of children’s educational and other attainment.

Since 1975, an increasingly sophisticated body of research has been charting the pathways through which fathers influence their children’s development.

For example, a systematic review of studies which took account of mothers’ involvement and gathered data from different independent sources, found ‘positive’ father involvement associated with a range of desirable outcomes for children and young people. These included: better peer relationships; fewer behaviour problems; lower criminality and substance abuse; higher educational / occupational mobility relative to parents; capacity for empathy; non-traditional attitudes to earning and childcare; more satisfying adult sexual partnerships; and higher self-esteem, life-satisfaction and ‘locus of control’ – that is, (Pleck & Masciadrelli, 2004). Other substantial studies and reviews (Sarkadi et al, 2008; Flouri, 2005) have delivered similar findings. All this is relevant to children’s educational outcomes, since ‘better functioning’ in life in general tends to correlate with attainment.

Of course, fathers, like mothers, can also influence their children’s development in negative ways – and this is now recognised to be a very important reason for engaging with them. Low levels of father involvement are associated with a range of negative outcomes in children (for review, see Flouri, 2005). Poor outcomes in children are also associated with their fathers’ substance misuse (Velleman, 2004, p. 188) and with fathers’ abuse of their children’s mothers (Jaffee et al, 1990).

It has often been argued that no father is better than a bad father. That can of course be true – just as no mother can be better than a bad mother. However, seeking to improve fathers’ behaviour should be the first port of call, since ‘ending’ the father-child relationship generally brings its own problems, and many fathers, once they are engaged with, can change their behaviour in a positive direction. And when children do not see their fathers, or do not see them very much, they tend to demonise or idealise them (Kraemer, 2005; Gorrell Barnes et al, 1998) or blame themselves for their absence (Pryor & Rodgers, 2001). Being ‘without my dad’ causes most children and young people a lot of distress, anger and self-doubt (Fortin et al, 2006; Laumann-Billings & Emery, 1998); and can contribute to difficulties with peer relationships, including bullying (Parke et al, 2004; Berdondini & Smith, 1996). And when fathers’ absence leaves mothers more stressed because they are struggling to parent alone or because they have less money, then children suffer again (McLanahan, 1997; McLanahan & Teitler, 1999).

Levels/trends in fathers’ involvement in their children’s learning

US research (National Center for Fathering, 2009) reports that while 32% of fathers never visit their child’s classroom and 54% never volunteer at school, the trend for
their involvement is upward. Over the past 10 years the percentage of fathers taking their child to school has risen from 38% to 54%; attending class events from 28% to 35%; visiting their child's classroom from 30% to 41% and volunteering at their child's school from 20% to 28%. Attending parent-teacher conferences is up from 69% to 77%; attending school meetings from 28% to 35%; and attending school-based parents' meetings from 47% to 59%.

While similar 'trend' data are not yet gathered in the UK, in Scotland the South Lanarkshire 'Father Figures' online survey of 177 men (Henderson, 2007) has delivered some baseline data: 86% of the respondent fathers said they read books/newspapers with their children at home; 60% claimed to help with their child's homework or schoolwork 'often', with only 3% 'never' helping with this; 77% 'often' went to parents' night, with only 3% 'never' attending; only 3% of respondents 'rarely' or 'never' read their child's school report card; and only 12% 'rarely' or 'never' attended their child's school show.

Another 2007 UK survey (Peters et al, 2008) found that 70% of co-resident fathers and 81% of non-resident parents (mainly men) wanted to be more involved in their children's education. Mothers were only marginally more likely than fathers (53% compared to 45%) to say they felt 'very involved' in their child's education.

While fathers in all developed countries are less involved than mothers both in their children's educational settings and in educational activities at home (for review, see Clark, 2009), in many instances his may be related less to gender than to work commitments: Peters et al (2008) found that while fathers overall were helping with homework less often than mothers there were no differences between mothers and fathers who worked full time. Similarly, Williams et al (2002) found 24% of full-time working fathers (compared with 26% of full-time working mothers) reporting feeling very involved in their child's school life; and 14% of full-time working fathers (compared with 16% of full-time working mothers) helping out in classrooms.

It seems that fathers are involved more often than mothers in specific types of activities in their children's out of school learning: such as building and repairing, hobbies, IT, maths and physical play (Goldman, 2005).

### Fathers’ involvement and children's educational attainment

Helping fathers be the 'best fathers they can be' is clearly of enormous importance to children; and positive outcomes in terms of children's learning and achievement at school can be traced quite clearly to the quality of their fathers' engagement with them. Just as poor parenting by fathers (and mothers) is associated with lower educational attainment by their children, so fathers’ affection, support, warm-but-firm parenting style and high levels of 'parental sensitivity' are strongly related to their children's better educational outcomes. For example:

- "School readiness" in young children is associated with high levels of paternal sensitivity, over and above mothers’ sensitivity (Campbell & von Stauffenberg, 2008)
- Fathers' support for their children's autonomy has been found (controlling for a range of variables) to be significantly and uniquely associated with higher levels of reading and mathematics achievement among Grade 3 boys (NICHD, 2008).

Several reliable studies have shown high levels of interest by a father in his child's schooling and education, his high expectations for their achievement and his greater direct involvement in their learning, education and schools to be associated with their better educational outcomes. These include: better exam / test / class results; higher levels of educational qualification; greater progress at school; better attitudes towards school (e.g. enjoyment); higher educational expectations; and better behaviour at school (e.g. reduced risk of suspension or expulsion). And these outcomes do not derive from the school-involved fathers already being richer or better educated. Whatever the father's socio-economic level, his high involvement paid off.6

One high quality study demonstrated that a father’s interest in his child’s education
is one of the most important factors governing the qualifications he or she will grow up to have in adult life – more important than family background, the child's individual personality, or poverty. It may well be that the time fathers actually spend with their children on homework and schooling could be more important for their eventual success than the money they bring into the household (for review see Goldman, 2005).

Here are some specific findings:

- A UK survey (Clark et al., 2009) reports children and young people claiming their fathers are the second most important people in their lives to inspire reading (second only to mothers).
- Frequency of fathers’ reading to 1–2 year olds is linked with their greater interest in books later (Lyytinen et al., 1998).
- A significant relationship is found between positive father engagement at age 6, and IQ and educational achievement at age 7 (Gottfried et al., 1988).
- A father’s own education level is an important predictor of his child’s educational achievement.
- English fathers’ involvement with their children (at ages 7 and 11) correlates with better national examination performance at age 16 (Lewis et al., 1982).
- US fathers’ involvement in routine childcare has been associated with children’s higher school grades (Hoffman & Youngblade, 1999).
- Low paternal interest in children’s education has a stronger negative impact on children’s lack of qualifications than contact with the police, poverty, family type, social class, housing tenure and child’s personality (Blanden, 2006).

Findings vary as to the relative importance of mothers’ v. fathers’ influence on educational attainment, with no consistent pattern emerging from the research evidence.

The following studies have charted more powerful influence from fathers than mothers in specific circumstances, although it must be remembered that the quality of these studies varies, and results may be specific to time and place.

In low income communities, fathers’ influence has been found to be more significant than mothers’ for boys’ (but not girls’) escape from disadvantage.

However, in a wider sample of children born in 1970, fathers’ interest in their children’s educational outcomes when those children were aged 10 predicted educational attainment in their 26 year old daughters, but not their sons (Flouri, 2006).

Fathers exert greater influence than mothers on boys’ educational choices.

Fathers’ risk-avoidance behaviour has a positive impact on sons’ (but not daughters’) educational attainment (Yeung, 2004).

Fathers’ income predicts sons’ (but not daughters’) years of schooling (Yeung, 2004).

In hierarchical communities, fathers’ influence may be more powerful on children of both sexes.

While within-gender variation is enormous, and parents’ vocabulary use is far more powerfully affected by their education level than their sex, some studies suggest that fathers’ verbal interactions with their children may differ from mothers’; and that this may sometimes be to their children’s advantage. Fathers have been found to use different words with their children (Pancsofar & Vernon-Feagans, 2006); and also more abstract words (Lamb & Tamis-LeMonda, 2004). Topics may also vary by gender, with mothers referring more frequently to emotions (this was found to predict children’s emotional understanding) and fathers more often using causal explanatory language, which predicated their children’s theory of mind (LaBounty et al., 2008).

Footnotes

1 The belief that one can control much of what happens to oneself in life

2 Although biological fathers are of unique important to children – being one of the ‘two people who made me’ – ‘fathers’ in this report are defined widely to include father-figures and other males who are of significance to children in their care.

3 This is really important, as it helps isolate fathers’ influence from other influences.

4 None of this research shows that fathers are a more negative influence on children than mothers are (see Leinonen et al., 2003).

5 Fathers who exhibit ‘parental sensitivity’ generally function as a supportive
presence, respect their children’s autonomy and exhibit low levels hostility towards them. This is more often found in men who were older when they first became fathers, hold less traditional child-rearing beliefs and report more intimacy with their children’s mothers (NICHD, 2000).

6 McBride et al (2004) found father involvement in school settings mediates the relationship between school, family and neighbourhood factors and academic outcomes. This study is particularly interesting in that it not only looked at fathers’ involvement in terms of activities (‘volunteering’, ‘going on school trips’) but also measured frequency of fathers’ ‘talks with school officials’ as well as their ‘talks with the child’ about events and activities at school. All were associated with better child achievement (see also McBride et al, 2005).

7 While there may be a small genetic effect, the main reason is likely to be that a father’s education affects his behaviour in ways that are vital to his child’s cognitive development, as well as impacting on the material and educational resources he can provide (Yeung, 2004).

8 Fathers’ co-parenting behavior (defined as sharing similar attitudes with mothers toward child-rearing practices and resolving family conflicts in a calm way that makes good use of compromise) may in part explain these findings: Yeung (2004) found a one-point increase in fathers’ co-parenting behaviour associated with an almost four-point increase in children’s test scores. Fathers’ co-parenting behaviour was second only to their education level in predicting good educational outcomes for children – and both proved more important than fathers’ income (Yeung, 2004).

9 In some studies fathers are found to be more influential; in others, mothers; and in yet others, parental influence seems to be equivalent.

10 For boys born into poverty, this high quality longitudinal UK study (which controlled for a range of factors, including mother’s interest in education) found having a father with little or no interest in his education reduced boys’ chances of escaping poverty by 25% (Blanden, 2006).


12 Such as wearing seatbelts, having savings, and having car insurance.

13 Ang (2006) found Asian fathers’ (but not mothers’) approval, closeness and sympathy with their children associated with positive teacher-child relationships for both boys and girls.

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National Center for Fathering (2009). Survey of fathers’ involvement in their children’s learning. View the summary


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Narcissism, Self-Esteem & Facebook

Following on from yesterday’s post on disinhibition and social networking, I came across this post from Dr Shock MD’s blog commenting on THIS RESEARCH PAPER (pdf) Credit to Dr Shock (excerpted). Interesting?

In normal everyday life with face to face contact the physical characteristics and knowledge about social background form the identity of your contact. It’s stable and three dimensional. You know that person, it’s therefor very difficult for the other to claim another identity or create impressions inconsistent with how you know him or her. Online identity is a different topic. You can create ideal identities not necessarily overlapping your real identity. It’s a controlled setting in which you can create different identities from the person you really are. Moreover, from research it has been shown that people act differently in social networking environments when compared to those interacting in anonymous settings. Online self representation can vary according to the nature of the setting.

What is the relationship between offline personality and online self representation on facebook?

A recent study looked at the effects of narcissism and self esteem on online social activity and self promotion. The researchers included 50 male and 50 female Facebook owners, they were randomly recruited at York university, their age ranged from 18 to 25 years. The Facebook pages were rated and the participants took
questionnaires about demographic information, Facebook activity, self-esteem (the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale) and narcissism (the Narcissism Personality Inventory).

Five features of the Facebook page were coded for the extent to which they were self-promoting: (a) the About Me section, (b) the Main Photo, (c) the first 20 pictures on the View Photos of Me section, (d) the Notes section, and (e) the Status Updates section.

Self promotion was distinguished as any descriptive or visual information that appeared to attempt to persuade others about one’s own positive qualities. For instance posting “My Celebrity Look-alikes”. Use of picture enhancement etc.

They found a strong relationship between narcissism and lower self-esteem with greater Facebook activity as well as more promotional self content. Gender did not influence these relationships.

This is another study implying that narcissism can be detected in Facebook, the previous study is also discussed on this blog: The Dangers of Facebook. Gender differences were found in another study but on risk taking attitudes. Men with profiles on social networking sites are higher in risk taking behavior and less worried about privacy issues compared to women.

In research looking at other personality factors, the Big Five was used amongst Facebook users. As discussed in a previous post on this blog: personality factors are not as influential as expected on using Facebook. The Big Five is probably not a very good instrument to investigate personality traits and Facebook use.


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August 25, 2010 Posted by peterhbrown | Education, Identity, Internet, Personality Disorder, Social Psychology, Technology | narcissism, social networking | 7 Comments

Why Do Some Friends Disappear When The Going Gets Tough?

It’s a question that many of us ask when terrible things happen. Where are the people who call themselves your friends when the going gets tough?

This reposted article from Harriet Brown of the New York Times may help you understand some of the possible answers.

Over the last few years, my family has weathered our share of crises. First our younger daughter was hospitalized for a week with Kawasaki disease, a rare condition in children that involves inflammation of the blood vessels, and spent several months convalescing at home. Soon after she recovered, our older daughter landed in the hospital with anorexia, which proved to be the start of a yearlong fight
for her life.

Somewhere in the middle of that process, my mother-in-law was given a diagnosis of advanced lung cancer, and died less than 11 months later.

So we’ve had plenty of opportunities to observe not only how we dealt with trauma but how our friends, family and community did, too. For the most part, we were blessed with support and love; friends ran errands for us, delivered meals, sat in hospital waiting rooms, walked, talked and cried with us.

But a couple of friends disappeared entirely. During the year we spent in eating-disorder hell, they called once or twice but otherwise behaved as though we had been transported to Mongolia with no telephones or e-mail.

At first, I barely noticed; I was overwhelmed with getting through each day. As the year wore on, though, and life settled in to a new if unpleasant version of normal, I began to wonder what had happened. Given our preoccupation with our daughter’s recovery and my husband’s mother’s illness, we were no doubt lousy company. Maybe we’d somehow offended our friends. Or maybe they were just sick of the disasters that now consumed our lives; just because we were stuck with them didn’t mean our friends had to go there, too.

Even if they were completely fed up with us, though, they had to know that my husband and I were going through the toughest year of our lives. I would have understood their defection if our friendship had been less close; as it was, I couldn’t stop wondering what had happened.

In the wake of 9/11, two wars and the seemingly ever-rising tide of natural disasters, we’ve come to understand the various ways in which people cope with crisis when it happens to them. But psychologists are just beginning to explore the ways we respond to other people’s traumas.

“We all live in some degree of terror of bad things happening to us,” said Barbara M. Sourkes, associate professor of pediatrics at the Stanford University School of Medicine. “When you’re confronted by someone else’s horror, there’s a sense that it’s close to home.”

Dr. Sourkes works with families confronted with the unfolding trauma of a child’s serious, and possibly fatal, illness. “Other people’s reactions are multifaceted,” she said. “There’s no formula, and it’ll change from person to person.” The only certainty is that traumatic events change relationships outside the family as well as within it.

Often the closer one feels to the family in crisis, the harder it is to cope. “Most people cannot tolerate the feeling of helplessness,” said Jackson Rainer, a professor of psychology at Georgia Southern University who has studied grief and relationships. “And in the presence of another’s crisis, there’s always the sense of helplessness.”

Feelings of vulnerability can lead to a kind of survivor’s guilt: People are grateful that the trauma didn’t happen to them, but they feel deeply ashamed of their reactions. Such emotional discomfort often leads them to avoid the family in crisis; as Dr. Sourkes put it, “They might, for instance, make sure they’re never in a situation where they have to talk to the family directly.”

Awkwardness is another common reaction — not knowing what to say or do. Some people say nothing; others, in a rush to relieve the feelings of awkwardness, blurt out well-intentioned but thoughtless comments, like telling the parent of a child with cancer, “My grandmother went through this, so I understand.”

“We have more of a societal framework for what to say and do around bereavement than we do when you’re in the midst of it,” Dr. Sourkes said. “Families say over and over, ‘It’s such a lonely time and I don’t have the energy to educate my friends and family, yet they don’t have a clue.’”

The more vulnerable people feel, the harder it may be to connect. A friend whose son suffered brain damage in an accident told me that the families who dropped them afterward had children the same age as her son. They could picture all too vividly the same thing happening to their children; they felt too much empathy rather than not enough.
That was true for us, too, I realized. The friends who had disappeared had daughters exactly the same age as ours.

Dr. Rainer describes this kind of distancing as “stiff-arming” — creating as much space as possible from the possibility of trauma. It’s magical thinking in the service of denial: If bad things are happening to you and I stay away from you, then I’ll be safe.

Such people often wind up offering what Dr. Rainer calls pseudo-care, asking vaguely if there’s anything they can do but never following up. Or they might say they’re praying for the family in crisis, a response he dismisses as ineffectual at best. “A more compassionate response,” he said, “is I am praying for myself to have the courage to help you.

True empathy inspires what sociologists call instrumental aid. “There are any number of tasks to be done, and they’re as personal as your thumbprint,” Dr. Rainer said. If you really want to help a family in crisis, offer to do something specific: drive the carpool, weed the garden, bring a meal, do the laundry, go for a walk.

I tested that theory recently, when a friend’s mother went through a series of medical crises and moved to an assisted-living facility in our town. Normally, I might have been guilty of pseudo-care, asking if I could do anything but never really stepping up. Instead, I e-mailed her a list of tasks I could do, and asked if any of them would be helpful.

To my surprise, my friend responded by asking if I’d visit her mother on a day she couldn’t. Her mother was glad for the company, and my friend felt reassured, knowing that her mother wasn’t alone.

And I had the chance to do something truly useful for my friend, which in turn let me show her how much I cared about her. The time I spent with her mother turned out to be a gift for me.

Thinking back to my own years of crisis, I wondered why I’d focused on the friends who didn’t come through when so many others had. In retrospect, I wished I’d taken a slightly more Zen-like attitude

“The human condition is that traumatic events occur,” said David B. Adams, a psychologist in private practice in Atlanta. “The reality is that we are equipped to deal with them. The challenge that lies before us is quite often more important than the disappointment that surrounds us.”

Harriet Brown is the author of “Brave Girl Eating: A Family’s Struggle With Anorexia,” being published next week.

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Mum's The Word: Pregnant Mums Prefer Their Mother's Advice To Their Doctor's Advice
Researchers from Royal Holloway, University of London have found that pregnant and postnatal women, while wanting to do the best for their baby, do not follow medical advice without question and are more likely to adopt practices their mothers and grandmothers carried out during their pregnancies.

The study by Professor Paula Nicolson and Dr Rebekah Fox from the Department of Health and Social Care at Royal Holloway is published in the Journal of Health Psychology and explores three recent generations of women’s experiences of pregnancy, questioning those who gave birth in the 1970s, 1980s and 2000s.

The women who were interviewed said they knew their mothers and grandmothers had their best interests at heart when they offered them advice. For the older women questioned, the advice from their female relations was their main source of information.

The 1980s and 2000s group, however, had to reconcile what they heard from older generations with direct advice from their doctors, midwives and health visitors as well as the numerous health messages on the web and self-help books.

Professor Nicolson says, “It is much to the credit of contemporary women that despite the unprecedented pressures from the media, medicine and the ‘pregnancy police’ that they are still able to filter in the advice that really suits them from all these sources. Each of the three generations found ways to ‘resist’ what they considered inappropriate pressures from advisors and were more likely to follow advice given to them from their mothers and grandmothers even if it went against the medical professions advice.

“Women tend to discuss the advice they are given with their female relatives and this leads to resistance to some types of advice. For example, despite being advised to cut down on caffeine during pregnancy one woman we questioned said she continued to drink tea because her grandmother told her it relieved her morning sickness.”

Professor Nicolson says women who take notice of general public health information about what is a healthy lifestyle, i.e not smoking, taking regular exercise, not taking drugs and drinking alcohol in moderation are those who are most likely to be in-tune with their bodies and can therefore ‘use’ guidelines but not be constrained by them.

She added: “Taking all the guidelines too seriously leads to anxieties. Lack of self-confidence also can lead to worry about ‘doing the wrong thing’ which is potentially more harmful than taking the odd glass of wine or eating soft cheese.”

Source: Sciencedaily

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Cool School Where Peace Rules: FREE Downloadable PC Video Game Teaches Kids Conflict Resolution Skills

Human development scientists and computer game developers designed a video game that teaches kids how to resolve conflicts peacefully amongst themselves. Inanimate objects, such as pencils and erasers, come to life to lead players through a series of common scenarios in which arguments are about to occur. The player is prompted for the non-violent solution and is rewarded for choosing correctly.

Amid growing concern surrounding the effects violent video games have on children, a new computer game could be the alternative parents have been waiting for.

You can download it HERE for free

Kids who play together also argue together. Fights over games, toys and friendships are common, but when arguments heat up, it's time to solve them before things get out of hand. A new computer game teaches kids how to solve playground and classroom quarrels that kids face every day in a positive way — without fists and fights.

"It helps them resolve conflicts by giving them a chance to think about what happens in the course of an actual conflict episode," said Melanie Killen, Ph.D., a human development expert at the University of Maryland in College Park, Md.

The game, called "Cool School: Where Peace Rules" — designed by a team of human development scientists, teachers, government mediators, computer game developers and animators — helps kids solve school violence and bullying while still having fun.

"You’re learning things, but at the same time it’s having fun with it," said student Ellen Yaffe.

Animated objects come to life and depict common conflicts. Kids experiment on how to settle each argument. Players have the option of threatening the peer, telling the teacher, forgetting about it or talking things through.

Players are rewarded for choosing positive solutions to resolve conflicts with letters they collect to win.

"What this game is doing is it’s empowering children to make choices and decisions and to see what unfolds based on their own decisions," Dr. Killen said.

Parents and teachers praise the new game, and kids love it for their own reasons.

"I think they make it very realistic with like the names and how the school looks," student Jacob Tycko told Ivanhoe.

The best part is the game is totally free. You can download it HERE for free

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Frequently asked questions.

At this rate, we’ll never get there on time! It doesn't have to be perfect. At this rate, we’ll frost one cupcake every hour! 2. If this situation persists. All of my friends are getting engaged, and I’m still single. At this rate, I’ll be a bridesmaid at least 10 times before I get to be a bride. See also: rate, this. Farlex Dictionary of Idioms. © 2015 Farlex, Inc, all rights reserved. at this rate. at this speed; if things continue in the same way. (Usually of a pessimistic view.) Hurry up! We’ll never get there at this rate. Rate. 1. Rate. 2. Rate. 3. Rate. 4. Rate. 5. Rate. 6. Rate. 7. Rate. 8. Rate. jimmy eat this show. 1 October 2009 | by joelseeman – See all my reviews. just got done watching ''the middle'and in all seriousness. i thought it was great a funny show from a mothers point of view. think ''Malcolm in the Middle'' but instead of his point of view the moms. i thought the kids were funny the daughter especially. me personally i thought this show works on many levels.

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