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## Singapore Newsletter

Dear GFI Family

Every parent and teacher wants to give their children the best education possible. Everyone would like education to be joyous adventure and celebration of life, as well as a solid preparation for living. Sadly, most education today falls far short of this goal.

This issue we share with you some thoughts on education that Growing Families stands by and advocates in our parenting curriculum. We glean from many experts in the field of education to allow you some comparisons.

*Train the heart and mind of your children well.*

*Andy & Dorcas Li*

*New Classes starting*  
*Adolescent*  
*Mar COS Marine Parade*  
*Infant & Toddler*  
*May FCBC*  
*Registration from GFI web*

### **GFA National Family Camping Conference**

*Camp Wattle Grove, Perth ,  
 Western Australia  
 Apr 5 to 9, 2007  
 A\$195/person  
 Children programme avail.  
[www.gfi.org.au](http://www.gfi.org.au)*

### **GFI Singapore Conference**

*Keynote Speakers:  
 Gary & Anne Marie Ezzo  
 7-11 Nov 2007*

*Details will be available on website at later date*

## *Train A Child The Way He Should Go*

*Each child can be trained  
 in the way he should go,  
 but not every child can be trained  
 to go in the same way.*

*Each child can be trained  
 to the highest and  
 fullest exercise of his powers,  
 but no child can be trained  
 to the exercise of powers  
 which are not his*

*'Hints on Child Training' by Henry Clay Trumbull, p. 9*

**Key Principle:  
 Virtuous Way Chapter 1  
 How to Raise a Moral Child**

*Without moral principle placed within the heart, the heart will not be stirred.*

# Children flourish amid structure

By David Brooks

HUMAN beings have divided selves. Some philosophers emphasise that people have a cool, rational side and an unruly, passionate side. Some theologians stress that people have a loving, virtuous side and a selfish, sinful side. Freudians used to emphasise the divisions between the ego, the superego and the id. But lately, some brain researchers have another way to conceptualise the divided self. They distinguish between the conscious, intentional parts of the mind and the backstage automatic parts.

The best metaphor for this last division comes from Mr Jonathan Haidt's wise book *The Happiness Hypothesis*. Imagine, he writes, a boy riding an elephant. The boy is the conscious mind, the prefrontal cortex and such. He can plan ahead. The elephant is the unconscious part of the brain, the amygdala and other regions. It produces emotions and visceral reactions. It processes information and forms intuitions.

These days, scientists are trying to understand the elephant, and journalists are popularising their results. In *Blink*, Mr Malcolm Gladwell describes how the elephant can pick up and process information, and even draw instant conclusions, before the boy is aware of what he is seeing. In *Social Intelligence*, Mr Daniel Goleman describes how elephants talk to each other while scarcely letting the boys in on the conversation. Fear, laughter and other emotions can sweep through crowds before the individuals in the crowds know what is going on.

The elephant is the repository of tacit knowledge. As Mr Robert Sternberg of Yale notes, tacit knowledge is procedural. It is knowing how, not knowing what. It is knowing how to listen, how to see and organise what you see.

A child born into a home where people use a lot of words develops a sophisticated ability to use language without having to sit down and consciously develop this skill. A child born into a home where actions have predictable consequences learns to restrain impulses and practise self-control.

The elephant does not acquire its knowledge from self-conscious study. The elephant absorbs information from the environment. The neural architecture of the brain is shaped by experiences and habits, often during the sensitive periods early in life.

This way of dividing the self is beginning to have a powerful influence on education policy and urban policy, and across a whole range of other practical spheres.

For example, Mr Paul Tough recently wrote in *The New York Times Magazine* on how to improve urban schools in the United States. In one scene, Mr Tough stands in front of a music class at a public school run by the Knowledge Is Power Programme (KIPP) in, according to its website, "under-resourced communities throughout the US".

The teacher is explaining Mr Tough's presence to the class, when he suddenly points to him and asks: "Do you notice what he's doing right now?" The class calls out: "Nodding!" The teacher was using Mr Tough's unconscious nodding to reinforce a lesson: that when you listen to a person you should look at the person, and you should actively listen.

Later in the class the teacher tells the students to adopt the "normal school" pose. The kids slouch low in their chairs and gaze off into space. Then they snap back to the approved posture: upright, all heads swivelling towards whoever is speaking.

In short, KIPP is taking skills that middle-class kids pick up unconsciously, and it is rigorously drilling them into students from less fortunate backgrounds. KIPP Academies, like many of the best schools these days, do not just cram data into brains. They educate the elephant. They surround students with a total environment, a holistic set of habits and messages, and they dominate students' lives for many hours a day.

A generation ago, in the US, the gods of education fashion ordained that children should be liberated from desks-in-a-row pedagogy to follow their "natural" inclinations. Human beings then were commonly divided between their natural selves, assumed to be free and wonderful, and their socially constructed selves, assumed to be inhibited and repressed.

But now, thanks to bitter experience and scientific research, we know that the best environments do not liberate students. We know, or have rediscovered, that the most nurturing environments are highly structured. Children flourish in homes that are organised, in families where attachments are stable, among people who plan for the future and within cultures that celebrate work.

Many of today's most effective anti-poverty institutions are incredibly intrusive, even authoritarian. Up to a point, elephants seem to like it that way.



PHOTO: REUTERS

**OUT OF THE MUDDLE:** Today, thanks to experience and research, we know that the best environments do not liberate students. We know, or have rediscovered, that the most nurturing environments are highly structured.

This article first appeared in THE NEW YORK TIMES and was quoted in The Straits Times, Singapore on Dec 5, 2006

## ***Churches Running GFI Programmes in Mar 2007***

### ***Infant Way***

*NA*

### ***Toddler Way***

*NA*

### ***Innocent Way***

*City Missions Church • FCBC • GFI*

### ***Adolescent Way***

*Church of Singapore*

### ***Middle Years Way***

*NA*

### ***Virtuous Way***

*City Missions Church • Covenant EFC • Church of Singapore • FCBC • GFI*

*If you have a GFI group running in your church and is not listed above, do email  
[dorcas.li@gfi-singapore.org](mailto:dorcas.li@gfi-singapore.org)*

## **Education is a Discipline**

Let me list a few successes we parents rejoice in when our children manage to produce them (perhaps as listed on a report card!):

Child X has a habit of attention; he concentrates well. He applies himself to whatever task is at hand, to the best of his ability. He thinks for himself, and has a rich creative imagination. He remembers what he has read or heard. He achieves a good standard in his work. He is obedient and careful. He is truthful. He respects others, and enjoys his own life with cheerful enthusiasm.

If such a child ever existed, his education would have been unusually successful.

Take attention and concentration. Why do some children attend while others cannot do so for five minutes in a row?

It is a habit. One child has the habit of attention, and the other never settles easily. He has the habit of restlessness, his mind is like a restless breeze.

Charlotte Mason laid the responsibility not at the child's door, but at ours. We have educated him, from babyhood, so that he has helpful habits or unhelpful ones. We can't get away from it.

The habit of a wandering mind may be produced by a chaotic educational setting, where the child is left in a fog of confusion. It can also be produced when he is "sat down" to weary hours of boring facts or twaddle-type material devoid of interest. Of course his mind wanders!

The habit of a dulled nonthinking mind may be easily produced by sitting a child in front of a TV for long periods.

The habit of noncommunication is also very easily produced. Mix busy adults with little time, and hours spent with large groups of children; add that nobody is especially interested in that particular child's mind or experiences, and you will have, perhaps, a person with no ability to communicate at all.

Or would you like to produce the habit of failure and discouragement? Just put a child into a class where everybody is supposed to learn according to a schedule, not according to individual ability. The child may fall behind because his parents had a bad fight, he missed two weeks of school with an earache, or maybe because he isn't ready to learn that particular step yet. Emotional and physical factors give variables of speed of progress, quite apart from ability or stage of development. So, the child misses out. Soon he gets Fs. Are you surprised that he habitually thinks he is dumb or bad or not as good as he should be? Yet another child in this setting will have mastered the offered material some time beforehand. What will his interest be? What habits will he get into? Jesus said we were not to put a stumbling block in our education given him?

There is no escape. It is our duty to consider how we can best help the child to have the right habits. Only then will he be able to easily get on with other people in life, his tasks and responsibilities, his interests, and even his relationship with his Lord.

We have lost sight of the fact that habit is to life what rails are to transport cars. It follows that lines of habit must be laid down towards given ends and after careful survey, or the joltings and delays of life become unsupportable. More, habit is inevitable. If we fail to ease life by laying down habits of right thinking and right acting, habits of wrong thinking and wrong acting fix themselves of their own accord.<sup>1</sup>

Take the habit of concentration. If this is well-formed, the child is then freed to make a good use of his time. If not, how tiresome every task becomes!

<sup>1</sup> "A Philosophy of Education" by Charlotte Mason

Source: 'For the Children's Sake' by Susan Schaeffer Macaulay

# Survey of Learning Styles

**Natural Learning Styles** Widely used traditional approach to learning theory. Children learn by one (or more) natural processes. Most natural models include visual (see it), auditory (hear it), and kinesthetic (do it) learners. Some models also include print (read it), and social (relate it). These styles have also been correlated with other temperament and personality models.

**Right/Left Brain** This approach is more physiology than it is personality, but it does offer valuable insights on modes of thinking and learning. The brain is divided into two hemispheres, each with its own mode of thinking. You predominantly use either one side or the other. Some children are predominantly "Right-brained" *global* thinkers—they think more intuitively, subjectively, and conceptually. Some children are predominantly "Left-brained" *linear* thinkers—they think more analytically, objectively, and factually.

**Innate Aptitude (Gardner, Armstrong)** Children are born with one of seven intelligences, or innate aptitudes, that determine what and how they will learn best (musical, artistic, logical-mathematical, linguistic, bodily-kinesthetic, interpersonal, intrapersonal). If given maximum opportunity and cultivation, they will excel naturally in their area of innate aptitude and intelligence.

**The Gregorc Model (Gregorc)** Children are one of four learning styles based on their Perceptual abilities, or how they prefer to take in information (Concrete or Abstract thinking), and on their Ordering abilities, or how they prefer to use that information (Sequential or Random thinking). Similar to Myers-Briggs. (1982.)

**Bible Models** Some Christian authors have attempted to create personality models based on various biblical concepts such as spiritual gifts, ways to show love, or Bible characters. These can be useful and helpful, but they tend to read too much into the biblical text. Again, even though personality is a biblical given, there is no definable "theology of personality" in the Bible.

**Temperaments (LaHaye)** Pastor LaHaye popularized the concept of temperaments, putting them into a Christian framework. He described four temperaments based on categories originally developed by Hippocrates (ca. 400 B.C.)—Sanguine, Choleric, Phlegmatic, Melancholy. He later differentiated each of those even further. Others have followed his lead with differing terminology.

**Temperament Types (Keirsey & Bates)** Personality and character model based on a variation of Myers-Briggs types. Their book, *Please Understand Me* (1984), is popular in some Christian academic circles. Includes a helpful chapter on temperament in children. Also includes an inventory for determining your type and temperament.

**Temperaments (Golay)** Dr. Golay developed a model of learning and teaching styles for use in the public schools (1982). Children fall generally into one of four temperaments or learning styles—Actual-Spontaneous, Actual-Routine, Conceptual-Specific, Conceptual-Global. These temperaments are derived from the Myers-Briggs and Kiersey & Bates models of personality type.

**The 4MAT System (McCarthy)** Children are one of four learning styles (Feeler, Thinker, Sensor, Intuitor). This approach is used extensively in public schools, and in some Christian curricula (Alta Vista). It is based on a synthesis of major personality and learning styles theories and research done in the early 1980's. It is primarily a modification of the Myers-Briggs personality model integrated with Right/Left Brain Theory.

**Personality Type (Myers-Briggs)** Isabel Briggs Myers proposed sixteen personality "types" based on four preferences

The spirit of faith and piety of the parents should be regarded as the most powerful means for the preservation, upbringing, and strengthening of the life of grace in children.

Theophan the Recluse

for thinking and living. The sixteen are often generalized into eight types or, more commonly, four temperaments. Numerous educators and writers, both secular and Christian, have used Myers' type theory as a model for their own learning and personality approaches. The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) is widely used in education. Although some are concerned about the Jungian roots of type theory, the MBTI is non-psychiatric and belief-neutral. It measures only the strength of preference for how one prefers to live, gather information and make decisions. Her book, *Gifts Differing* (1980), summarized a lifetime of work in developing her personality type model and the MBTI. The book contains extensive sections on the applications of type to education and parenting.

Source: *Educating the WholeHearted Child* by Clay & Sally Clarkson [www.wholeheart.org](http://www.wholeheart.org)

# Factors of Learning

## Just How Smart Is Your Preschooler?

Go ahead and boast just a little, because cognitively, your preschooler is truly amazing. Learning continuously occurs through interaction with her environment. Yet, a preschooler's interpretation of these new experiences flourishes only within the context of knowledge already gained and understood. This is a critical point. Learning for all of us is progressive, built piece upon piece. Your little person is no different. She will only gain understanding when new information has meaning in relationship to previous experiences. Pushing a jack-in-the-box off the edge of the counter may cause it to burst open. Then again, it may not. Either way, the true joy of the toy is missed. Only after careful study, demonstration, and moments spent fiddling with the box does the preschooler appreciate the very definite cause and effect of this toy. Another push off the counter is merely hit and miss.

Routine and orderly transition at each stage of a preschooler's development aid the marriage between new information and a preschooler's understanding. Learning is positively impacted by order and routine and negatively impacted by random chaos. For a preschooler, rummaging through a cabinet, discarding its contents, bursting forth to overturn counter stools, and then running to the fridge for magnet rearranging is most certainly chaos of the random kind. While sorting through new information in an orderly fashion allows a child to accurately learn cause and effect, an environment where the child is left to roam at large offers random reactions. Here the child has nothing sensible to assimilate.

The child who can associate right meanings with new experiences is far more advanced in his or her understanding than the child who must associate a new meaning with an old situation that stands in need of correction. The latter, sadly, is a common legacy of laissez-faire (permissive) parenting. Since learning comes in progressive stages, training should take place progressively as well. For this reason, parents need to provide their child with a learning environment that matches information with understanding. This is more simple than you might think and far more beautiful than a kitchen covered with pots, pans, and toys strewn everywhere. There are many factors that influence learning, both positively and negatively. The child's temperament, the presence or absence of siblings, parental resolve, the purpose for training, the method of instruction, and reinforcement are some of the more obvious ones. Generally speaking, you will spend all of your parenting years in three arenas of knowledge.

These three arenas of knowledge are:

- Life skills (health and safety)
- Intellect
- Morality

*'The human race, 'someone once said, 'is made up of two groups of people: those who divide people into groups, and those who don't. ' People who study personality development divide people into groups... The number (of groups) isn 't important. What's important is the enormous improvement in family happiness that can result when family members understand themselves and each other.*

LaVonne Netf, *One of a Kind*, Multnomah, 1988

## Skills

Not all behavior is moral in nature. Some actions are morally neutral—such as those related to basic skills. One of the most important and most rapid areas of development during the early years of a child's life is the development of motor skills. Learning to use a spoon, walk, swim, tie a shoelace, ride a bike, kick a ball, and climb a rope are amoral (neither moral nor immoral), stage-acquired activities. They are skills associated to a large extent with the child's environment, opportunities to learn, and his motivation to do so. From the helpless state of infancy, the development of skills like the ones mentioned above begins and moves forward. Most children learn these feats in progressive stages. For example, when a toddler throws a ball, he uses his entire body. As coordination develops, your preschooler will begin to throw the ball using only his arm.

Skills, talents, and giftedness are not the same. Skills, such as learning to walk, coloring within the lines, riding a bike, learning to swim, and throwing a ball, are basic to all human being. Natural talents differ from skills in that they are discriminatory. Some people may have a particular talent that others do not. All of us have talents, but not necessarily the same talents. Giftedness is a talent magnified. Many musicians are naturally talented, but Mozart was gifted.

## Intellect

Intellectual learning is the accumulation of data and the ability to apply logic, or reasoning skill, to given situations. Academic learning, much like physical development, moves from general to specific and is progressive. We teach our children the alphabet so they can learn to put letters together to form words and then read those words. They first learn to count—1,2,3,4,5—but it will be a while before they realize that those numbers also can represent 12,345. Children first learn about trees and then begin to distinguish, for example, pine trees from oak trees. Eventually, they will also learn to identify the different varieties of pine trees.

## Moral Training and Collateral Value

While academic training is important, it is greatly supported and enhanced with moral life skills. The nature of moral training and the components of character formation create the infrastructure of logic and reason, which is borrowed by the intellect. In time, this advances the child's overall cognitive skills. By that we mean moral training has accompanying corollary value that academic training does not. Because moral training is a highly integrative process (moral thought + moral action = doing the right thing), the integration pathways of learning in general are multiplied and thus borrowed by the academic side of the preschoolers organizing brain. This is why we are strong advocates of parenting the "whole child" This concept, while developed more fully in the next book in this series, *On Becoming Childwise*, has earned a place here for preschool parents.

Source On Becoming PreSchoolwise by Gary Ezzo & Dr Robert Bucknam, pg 29-33