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NOURISHING THE WHOLE BRAIN

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Modern scientific research has begun to decipher the mysteries of the brain, greatly enhancing our understanding of teaching and learning. Many recognize the “left brain/right brain” paradigm, signifying the left and right cerebral hemispheres, but the brain is triune as well as binary.

The brain stem automates vital functions and controls the “fight or flight” response AND its counterbalancing “relaxation response.” While excessive stress blocks education, breathing and relaxation techniques can facilitate teaching and learning by countering stress and nourishing the nervous system.

Extending from the brain stem, the limbic system regulates and communicates more complex emotional behaviors; the amygdala and hypothalamus process and memorize emotionally laden events. These discoveries provide a rationale for schooling the intrapersonal and interpersonal skills of “emotional intelligence.”

The cerebral cortex, the seat of human intelligence and creativity, is the third structure of the brain’s evolutionary layers and is composed of twin cerebral hemispheres integrated by a thick bridge of neurons. While the left hemisphere is specialized for language and the right for nonverbal processing of visual-spatial, kinesthetic and musical functions, the two sides function naturally and normally as a *unified whole*. Because language, an activity of the whole brain, requires an *emotionalized logic* of grammar and intonation, practicing language arts (writing in a journal, reading poetry, attending the theatre, singing or writing songs, studying a foreign language) will nourish the whole brain. Music is also an activity of the whole brain. While the right cerebral hemisphere processes pitch, timbre and chords, the left is specialized for musical composition and sequential melodies, and both sides process rhythm. Thus, another excellent way to nourish the whole brain is to listen to or play music.

Split-brain research has been (mis)used to support a false dualism between science and art, logic and creativity. People, the curriculum of our schools, even cultures, have been labeled as either “left/right-brained.” Instead, just as the brain functions naturally as an integrated whole, we, as teachers and educators, should seek to unify the grammar and poetry of language, the intellectual understanding and creativity of art, the facts and stories of history, the logic and beauty of mathematics—in short, the art of science and the science of art.



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RECHARGE YOUR TEACHING ENERGY OVER THE SUMMER

Use these suggestions to relax, renew and recharge:

READ!

Give yourself permission to revisit a favorite children's book or to find a new one. Lose yourself in the pleasure of imagination.

WRITE!

Begin keeping a daily journal; document personal thoughts, feelings, or even daily activities. The few moments you spend in reflection can be a wonderful energy boost and may establish a pattern you can carry into the coming school year.

EXERCISE!

Turn off the television and take a walk out of doors – appreciate the natural world anew. Try to look at the world around you with fresh eyes. Take a yoga or tai-chi class out of doors.

INSPIRE!

List five reasons why you became an educator. Ask yourself if those goals or ideals are reflected in your lessons or your activities in the classroom? If not, what can you do to change that?

CONNECT!

Don't isolate yourself during the summer! Continue relationships with coworkers, work together collaboratively when possible and form and maintain a support system with your colleagues. Though you may not always want to discuss the classroom, your peers can be an excellent source of inspiration and become partners in collaborations that can reenergize you for the coming year.

SUMMER READING RESOURCES

- *The Artist's Way* by Julia Cameron is a wonderful book about bringing creativity into daily life, whether you see yourself as "artistic" or not.
- In *Creative Healing: How to Heal Yourself by Tapping Your Hidden Creativity*, Mary Rockwood Lane explores the emotional and physical healing that can be achieved through artistic and creative activity.
- *The Mozart Effect: Tapping the Power of Music to Heal the Body, Strengthen the Mind and Unlock the Creative Spirit* by Don Campbell
- *Wherever You Go, There You Are: Mindfulness Meditation in Daily Life* by Jon Kabatt-Zinn
- *The Art and Craft of Teaching* edited by M.M. Gullette
- *Teaching Tips* by William J. McKeachie



Credits: Page 1, Top: (detail) Louis Valtat, French, 1869-1952, *Valtat and his Son*, Oil on canvas, 23 3/4 x 29 1/4 in., Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Edward W. Lane, Jr. AG1989.12.1. Page 2, Bottom: Ninah May Holden Cummer, American, 1875-1958, *My Garden at the St. Johns River*, 1947, Needlepoint on panel, 21 x 27 in., Bequest of Ninah May Holden Cummer, C.107.1. Page 4: Top: (detail) Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, French, 1864-1901, *Moulin Rouge-La Goulue*, 1891, Brush and spatter lithograph, Gift of William S. Kindead, 1975-11-5, Krannert Art Museum, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

THE POWER TO HEAL

By Hope McMath

Director of Education at The Cummer Museum of Art & Gardens

It is a documented fact that the arts have the power to heal. The healing that occurs when someone is exposed to music, visual arts, dance, and poetry is physical, spiritual, and emotional - a concept that is changing healthcare in this country and around the world. Hospitals, nursing homes and outpatient clinics are now filled with art on the walls, art making stations in waiting rooms, and musicians visiting patients' bedsides.

The arts are also a powerful tool in caring for caregivers. Whether nurses, doctors, social workers or family members, immersion in the arts helps caregivers deal with stress, express emotion, and benefit from the positive aspects of creative activity. The premise behind caring for caregivers is that individuals must first care for themselves, in a holistic manner, before giving to others. Interestingly, much of what has been learned regarding art and healing can now be applied to educators. To be able to share knowledge and compassion with students, teachers must first be personally fulfilled, healthy and happy.

In *Private Lessons: A Book of Meditations for Teachers*, Joy Jones proposes that to be *motivating* you must first feel *motivated*. The book serves up 180 messages - one for every school day - that are sure to rejuvenate the enthusiasm and nurture the personal growth of teachers everywhere. Jones' thought-provoking quotes, daily themes, and lasting affirmations will give teachers the emotional and practical support they need to remain inspired and stay passionate.

Whether you read *Private Lessons* or take advantage of some of the ideas offered in this newsletter, give yourself permission to care for yourself by prescribing a dose of art. Resist looking at arts activities as more events to schedule and realize that to be uplifted, inspired, or merely focused on one joyful activity should rank at least as high as the shower we take each day or the television show that we watch in the evening. Recharge your batteries and bring new energy to your students by starting a daily journal, listening to your favorite music, singing loudly, digging in your garden, or watercoloring just because it feels good.





EXHIBITIONS:

Toulouse-Lautrec: Artist of Montmartre
May 3 to July 14, 2002

Passion and Clarity: The Art of Joseph Jeffers Dodge
August 9 to September 22, 2002
Members' Preview -
Thursday, August 8 6:00-8:00 PM

ART CONNECTIONS EXHIBITIONS:

Art for the Blind
Tactile Images Created by the Junior Docents
May 13 to June 2, 2002

Works by Children with Autism
June 4 to June 30, 2002

The Art of Camp Cummer
July 2 to August 31, 2002

RESOURCES

Visit these websites to find ideas for recharging your teaching energy:

- <http://www83.homepage.villanova.edu/richard.jacobs/EDU%204291/learning/Index.htm>
Sponsored by Villanova University, this site is designed for beginning teachers, but Lesson #5, titled "I'm so tired," is a valuable page with advice on maintaining energy and enthusiasm for the classroom.
- <http://www.nea.org/helpfrom/growing/index.html>
Visit the National Education Association website, particularly the section titled, "Growing in My Job", for advice, tips, and discussion groups aimed at helping teachers.
- http://www.educationworld.com/a_issues/issues181.shtml
Education World site offers suggestions for teachers on how to deal with and reduce stress.

Summer Workshop Information:

FOCUS ON COLLAGE

Saturday, June 29

10:00 AM-3:00 PM

This workshop will explore both wet and dry collage techniques. Learn to use collage for card making, journals and as a way to further explore color and design. *A picnic will be included during the class, so please bring your lunch!* Space is limited.

Ages: Adult

Instructor: Stephanie Sipp

Members: \$40

Non-members: \$45

Active Docents: \$20

For other chances to enjoy a relaxing and creative summer activity, visit www.cummer.org to see our complete listing of Studio Art Classes for Adults, our Gallery Tour schedule, and our Especially for Seniors Seated Gallery Tour Schedule.

SUMMER EVENINGS AT THE CUMMER:

Bistro Nights

Thursday, June 6, 13, 20 and 27 5:30-8:30 PM

Stop by after work and relax at the bistro. Enjoy live music and complimentary coffee. On June 6 and 20, special programs related to *Toulouse-Lautrec: Artist of Montmartre* will treat guests to the fascinating culture of Paris at the turn of the century.

Learn more about exciting events at the Cummer by visiting our website at www.cummer.org. To book a tour, please call *Art Connections* at 355-0630.