

CHANGING LIVES

SINGAPORE
BRAIN
DEVELOPMENT CENTRE



>> All About Unleashing Your Child's True Learning Potential

August 2007

“Argh! My child is a slow reader”

What We All Can Do To Prevent It From Happening

“LEARNING DISABLED”

VS

“UNABLE TO LEARN”

SMART CHILD, RECKLESS LABELS

Parenting 101

How to Take the Guesswork Out the Most Important Role In Our Lives



From the Editor's Desk

Welcome back to another bimonthly issue of Changing Lives!

The past few months have seen a flurry of activity, here at Singapore Brain Development Centre as well as in the general picture – Primary School Admission Exercise, Tertiary Institution Admission Exercise, MOE engaging Forrester Research House to survey the overall satisfaction of teachers, calling it, 'Climate Survey'.

In SBDC, we have just successfully graduated another batch of **Powermind Bootcamp** program graduates; now in its second and growing from strength to strength.

This current batch enjoyed an extended stay in the outdoors; from the feedback garnered from our trainers and some suggestions made by active parents, **Outdoor Training activities provide an experience that a classroom cannot provide.**

As a result, the students were brought to Jurong Fish Mart, of all times, at 3 am in the morning to have a first-hand experience of how their fishes that usually comes so easily to them as meals are in fact, no easy catches; some fishermen returned empty-handed while others have to make do with a lower price for an abundant catch as an over-supply exerts a downward pressure on price.

Amidst the haggling and bustling, the Powermind Bootcamp students learnt the value of hard work and gratitude while at the same time, getting a test on their wits as they have to solicit answers to a few mind-boggling questions that their trainers have thrown at them!

The response we obtained from the parents post-training was overwhelming, with 30% of our Powermind Bootcamp students at Yeley following up with our Powermind Class program, entrusting us to further build the depth of their learning after the Bootcamp program!

All this would not have been possible without the consultation and the collaboration with our partners in the education field. Special thanks to Kelvin Lim, Master Certified Coach (second in Asia-Pacific to be recognized by the International Coach Federation as Master Coach) who gave us invaluable advice to refine our training to adopt coaching techniques, and Kent Ridge Tutor Centre, our partner in education who referred to us many student who needed that extra boost in mental capacities.

Last but not least, **this issue is dedicated to the 'silent' heroes and heroines, whose belief in us have motivated us to go that extra mile – the parents!** In our efforts to bring more value to the students who we have trained, we have brought our training to the parents because they are the true guardians for their spirit, the nurturer of their souls and their trusted guide, provider and friend.

With the parents trained in the art of intuitive, natural parenting, the students will benefit more from our training with their parents help. Ultimately, the children are the ones who are the masters of the future. We will do no less in helping to change their lives than to work with their parents.

Elite Wee
Editor-in-Chief
Changing Lives

Newsbytes

▶ Special Education (SPED) Schools are now in full swing.

SPED schools are a MOE initiative to build a more 'inclusive' society.

Besides being an economic powerhouse, the all-important barometer of a nation's success lies in its graciousness and its ability to narrow the income gap between the haves and the have-nots.

As such, SPED schools play an important part in ensuring that kids who need that extra assistance in their learning are **not readily and unfairly labelled as 'slow' learners** and put on a reduced curriculum; when these kids, with that extra little help, will be as capable as any mainstream students.

Indeed, often times, it is the care and concern of Special Education Officers (SEOs) that removes the fear of learning due to their constant failures in understanding the lessons that put them on a path of success.

As Mrs Mary Neo, a SEO said, "I still remembered this father whose child was dyslexic who returned to thank me long after the child has graduated from primary school. He was grateful that his daughter was accorded a place in the mainstream school like all her other friends"

The stigma and damage done to a child's psyche could be more than we can ever imagine. To quote from Mr Alex Flemming, Director of Research in Early Education,

“...without proper intervention, *our system is capable of mishandling a child* if he or she is relegated to a lower-level stream (of learning) because a psychologist's report said so.”

Indeed, here at SBDC, we offer the unadulterated advice based on our scientific results, namely the *Gibson Cognitive Test Report (GCTB)* to provide the best training for a child's learning needs.

Because in SBDC, we do not believe any child is learning disabled. These children are just unable to learn for reasons that are too many; ranging from

- emotional instability in families,
- absent parents due to excessive work commitments,
- to a lack of training in basic phonics in early education that impedes reading abilities.

To think that anyone can readily pinpoint a child's inability to learn as a Learning Disability vis-a-vis a person who's visually disabled is hedging that on all possible explanations, only one is acceptable. This thinking is clearly archaic at best and at worst, criminal, given the current scientific advancements in the understanding of the human mind.

▶ **Spatial Processing as an important skill**

From our latest research in our consultation with our partners, *Spatial Processing* (or *Visual Processing* as some would call it) is a fundamental skill of learning.

Spatial Processing is the ability to discern objects, pictures, people around us and to store for retrieval in our memory when it is needed later.

It cuts across all aspects of life; whether you are a student, a construction worker, a businessman, a sportsman or a mother, the ability to visually process (much like the best cameras in the market, except better) has tremendous implications.

Imagine that you can recognize the faces of the people you come across and attach meanings to it so that you can remember their names.

Or that you can visually process at lightning speed, what is immediately happening around you and act accordingly. For top performers like air force pilots, this ability or the lack thereof, directly impacts the success of flight missions.

As such, the games that we let our children play must build this ability at a young age.

Whether it is make-believe games, cooking (masak-masak), lego, these games involve the manipulation of disparate objects in space, combining for some intended purpose, with an element of fun that adds to a child's visual processing speed and memory.

Playing, for a child, is truly *learning* in this case.

Watch For This Space!

Parent Coach: A new approach in parenting

Ask any parent whether he or she has any issue with the child and the list rattles on.

“Come to think about it, who has shared anything about parenting to us PARENTS before? “

“Isn't it intuitive that with something as important as bringing up our children well, we should at least have a few years of training?”

“If we can be trained to do our jobs well, certified as professionals in our respective fields where our hands find its work, shouldn't we also be equipped with recognizable skills, knowledge and the strategies when we communicate with our children?”

The fact is, many parents adopt the same parenting styles which they were *parented* to. As children once, they learned the most valuable lessons, one based upon a whole lifetime of experience, of HOW their parents supported them, provided for them, influenced them and responded to them as a child. The question is,

Are these techniques or parenting skills applicable in their lives now that they are parents themselves?

This is assuming of course, that our parents are imitable as role models. For the fortunate few who enjoyed unconditional love and has our developmental needs met as a child whether psychologically, physically or emotionally with a strong father and a gentle and caring mother, perhaps they are our best guides in parenting our own children.

For the rest of us, does this describe us?

- How does a child listens?
- What are their main concerns?
- How and where to work with them?
- When to inspire or motivate them?
- When to leave them alone?
- When, where and how to discipline them?
- How to be in control of situations?
- How do children feel about responsibility?
- How to instill values that would make them successful in any endeavors, not just academics?

A methodology that is based on solid research in child development is needed, based on correlational and experimental strategies culled from our studies on

parenting. In this way, we take the guesswork out of **one of the most important roles in our lives – that of a parent.**

With this in mind, **Parent Coaching** is developed as a set of technologies to unleash your child's effectiveness and potential. It takes the form of a coaching relationship to connect you and your child to support the accomplishment of goals and the achievement of extraordinary results.

Parent coaching is a forwarding process, with its foundation in psychology, cognitive, behavioral and social learning theories.

In this regard, SBDC has partnered with Mr Kelvin Lim Kian Meng, founder of Executive Coach International (ECI), second in Asia to be recognized as a Master Certified Coach.

Together with Kelvin, SBDC is proud to announce the start of our first Parent Coaching workshop on the **10th and 11th August 2007.**

As our loyal customers, we are pleased to offer you a certificate of entitlement to the "Parent Coaching Workshop" for a **member's price.**

Please **bring along this newsletter** as proof of your membership.

Hope to see you then!

CHANGE

It's a fight between Goliath and David. On one side of the battle pit in the hills of Israel stands a lone boy, behind him his King, Saul, and his brothers, also comrades-in-arms in battle. In fact, he does not consider himself worthy as he has NOT seen a single moment of battle in his entire life. What brought him out to challenge the monstrosity that is standing 8 feet tall in front of him, taunting him, his King, his country but mainly his God, is the faith that he has grown up with.

He still remembers the times when he was younger; not that he is much older now, at a tender age of 18 years old, he is considered material for a shepherd boy at best, a foolish sacrifice at worst. Then as now, he would hymn his devotional tunes to his beloved King, of heaven and not of earth and prayed. Yes, he prayed especially when he lost a sheep to the many threats in the open plains, none of them more fearsome than the the pack of lioness. Somehow, his prayers were answered. He did not know how or why, but it did almost every time. The lionesses always hunt in packs and to fend them off means to a battle of wits not of strength. Like now.

David's instinctively adopts a defensive stance, his arms taut and readies for battle. Standing not too far in front of him, Goliath, curses him. A champion of champions, against a boy. Has Israel no better soldier than to send a vagabond to fight with him, shield, sword, armour and all?

Goliath charges. David has seen this before in his many battles with animals in the wild. He knows that he only has one shot. His arm is now coiled, the sling dangling in mid-air. With a deafening roar, Goliath races forward. David, in spite of its multiple battles with animals, is still surprised at the speed at which this creature moves. Closer now.

With hardly a twitch, David starts to swing his sling. Slowly at first. Each swing is calculated, each twirl and swoosh masterminded, aided by a trained arm. Frighteningly close now, the stench of the creature engulfs him in a downward wind. At its fullest speed, the sling was a blur, almost invisible. Releasing it takes skill and deftness, David had lots of practice. A slight twitch in the arm is all it takes for the stone, cusp in the sling, to be released from home. In his fury, Goliath did not see it coming until it was too late. His screams was momentarily stifled, his life snuffed out by David. A boy.

The above scene depicts the struggles that many educators go through everyday in their quest for that prized glory. Except that in this case, the glory is not for the honour and name of country and people but for the child interested to read.

To most of us adults, reading is something that we take for granted. However, do you know that **speech development takes place as young as 6 months**, and if we are not careful in nurturing our language development – through regular conversations with parents, exposure to rich sources of literary text – we will have great difficulties gaining competency in the language later on as an adult?

Reading then will not be automatic but a laborious task. Considering how humans have developed our lingua franca, roughly from hand signs, simple sounds and then symbols, drawings and rudimentary alphabetic code, is it surprising that language

must be trained, taught and caught and not mere happenstance?

A lot of language-related problems, slow reading, poor vocabulary, eye regression and fixation (where the reader regressed to an earlier word or sentence and is focused on a single point for far too long respectively), can be corrected at a *young* age, if the *correct* help is given.

Remediation of the problems of a young child, or *early intervention* as it is commonly known, has a high chance of success in solving the identified problem.

The question then is - how do we identify that a child who is just plain lazy or that he needs early intervention?

Like David, we must learn about the target of our planned attacks; though big, it is not insurmountable.

To understand that, we must be well-aware that **reading consists of 5 stages:**

1. **Perception** – perceiving colors, especially black and white since it is the colour most text is written in, forms, shapes and sequence (dyslexics have the problem of distinguishing d and b, p and q, all related to how the alphabet is written)
2. **Processing** – visual processing, how the mind is able to perceive mental images, specifically, patterns
3. **Retrieval** – of words from working memory – both short and long-term memory – but especially the latter as words tend to be forgotten over time.
4. **Understanding** – after reading them, understanding them in the context as was given entails that the reader reads substantially. It is one thing to be able to read, it is quite another to understand what was read. Both are not synonymous, although parents, educators hope fervently everyday that this is so.
5. **Application** – applying what is immediately understandable seems intuitive enough. However, there are learning strategies and skills to help readers to apply what they have learnt.

Hence, without proper understanding of how reading works, can you see that it is easy for anyone to deem a child as a poor reader or worse, as learning disabled, rather than a struggling reader (in any of the afore-mentioned stages), unabled but not disabled?

The consequence of a mislabeling your child is huge. Statistics have shown that confidence needs to be built regularly in a child, and it is common sense that a child who is thus labelled as learning disabled or 'slow' reader amongst a multitude of terms will rather soon be a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Fortunately, there are scientific tools and programs available to help your child to identify his learning needs. Ranging from internationally recognized Woodcock-Johnson test to Gibson Cognitive Test Battery, children will be tested first of any signs of reading difficulties then prescribed a solution in the form of a mediation program like Master The Code or Powermind Intensive. Results vary but it can be seen sometimes as early as 1 month into the program and 3 months should observe some discernible changes in a child.

Please don't hesitate if you suspect your child to be struggling in his reading problems. With a proper early intervention program set in place, based on scientific methodologies and tests, we are able to help almost any child be back on the feet again to have the confidence they deserve.

We know. Thousands of children have benefited.

Featured Speaker

Executive Coach International (ECI) was founded in 1997 by Kelvin Lim Kian Meng, second in Asia to be recognised as a Master Certified Coach. Within 6 years, Executive Coach International has built her way up to becoming one of the leading coaching organizations in the region, boasting the largest body of Internationally Qualified Coaches to be certified by the International Coach Federation based in the USA. Kelvin had trained thousands in its 10 years history.

ECI's innovations in transformational coaching methodology and technology have a pronounced and beneficial effect on clients from all walks of life, all over the world. The coaching in ECI caters to different levels and dimensions of a person's evolution. ECI stands committed to all its clients in creating significant breakthroughs in living powerful and inspiring lives.

- 1) What got you into coaching in the first place?
- 2) Can you define coaching for us in a few short sentences?
- 3) Do you think it is applicable for all of us, regardless of age, gender and profession?
- 4) How can coaching be applied to parenting?
- 5) Since we are specifically focusing on Parent Coaching in our context, how would parents benefit from the coaching process which you have just mentioned?
- 6) Amongst the benefits which you have just highlighted, which of those in your view, best meet the needs of parents today?
- 7) Why do you think that this is a common issue amongst parents today?
- 8) If you can complete the sentence, parenting today is like...