

A GAME CHANGING SPECTRUM SUPPORT APPROACH

I'm here to support your children, those who are spectrum learners, and you, those who care and advocate for them. Spectrum learners are those with Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD), Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder (ADHD), dyslexia, Asperger's Syndrome, and autism. I'm sure what you want for your son or daughter is acceptance and success as they grow, and as they look for their hopefully, meaningful and purposeful niche in this world.

They are as we know, different from others. But, I am wondering if you see their differences in the same particular way that I do.

Raising a child who has ADD, and myself also being ADD, as well as teaching in the San Ramon School District in California, with 15% of my 3rd grade, regular education class on the spectrum each year, I came to a very different view of how they are oriented. That orientation is to the **right brain and heart, operating without a left-brain filter or translator mechanism of how to relate to our more left brain-created world.**

With this different orientation, our kids draw from a broad information receptivity, a receptivity that other thinkers are not now, or yet, aligned with. This broad reception is of the right brain which is open to a wide field of knowledge like a satellite dish. This special orientation calls for a different meaning of ADD. Instead of Attention Deficit Disorder, it should be **Attention Differently Directed, which also applies to all others on this spectrum.**

Our kids have a very sensitive nervous system, and just generally, or given the right circumstances, they are heart and gut connected to the world, wanting to make a contribution. In all my classes, these right-brained oriented children saw the deeper meanings in what was being studied, were intuitive, passionate about many or one thing, thought outside-the-box, and very often loved nature, animals, patterns, spatial relationships, etc.

Lacking a left-brain filter, many of these students have great difficulty communicating socially, for idioms, trending vocabulary, and face and body language are assessed and understood by the left brain. Therefore, these individuals are often alone, with another more like them, or on a computer, these individuals often considered by others to be 'reclusive.'

And, there are those individuals who may be interested, but have some or great difficulty mixing with others in the world, for they are essentially here

for a kinder and gentler experience of acceptance, love, and for some, out-of-the-norm focused interests. All are to be valued, loved, and supported for just who they are, and with a good understanding of them we can help them discover their niche that allows them to do well. (See my paper, “Supporting ADD-Autism Spectrum Individuals Finding Their Place in This World,” and my many other related papers, some short and others much more in-depth, at my website: HeartCenteredMinds.com.)

Adding to what I saw in my teaching and you probably see in your children, there is brain information to be understood also. Much is being researched, of course, but most of it referring to what is missing or aberrant. However, as many are now saying, “Let’s focus on what these kids can do.” There is brain research being done that supports and advocates for the way their brains want to work.

The first I will mention of this brain functioning is written by Joseph Chilton Pearce in his book, *The Heart-Mind Matrix, or How the Heart Can Teach the Mind New Ways To Think*. In this book, Pearce discusses at length the circumstances and research showing that the brain is evolved to develop optimally within the vital environment of nurturing at each stage of its growth.¹ And this is optimal for *all* brains.

So, from where does nurturing arise, and what do we do to nurture? To nurture starts with being in our heart ourselves, and it is then to accept, encourage, give space to learn, and allow appropriate challenges for the developing individual along with other components. With our different-learning children or young adults who are connected to a broad expanse of information, with explorative, insight-based, intuitive, out-of-the box, and often replicating intelligence, we are to help them maintain these special differences, including and encouraging their own heart openness while helping them weave into this world.

What and how can we be more nurturing? The Institute of HeartMath in Boulder Creek, California, and others, are making both a science and an art of this. As a start, HeartMath teaches to center in our heart, the physical place of nurturing, by breathing as though we are *breathing through our heart*.

We can try this right now. Drop down from your mind and let’s center our attention in the heart, touching it to help, and take 3 or 4 relaxed breaths. You will notice this has a warm, calm and fulfilling feeling. Try it again. Now, in contrast to that, remember what it feels like to be thinking about a

busy schedule you are trying to arrange. Quite a bit different, right? This heart breathing instead warm and relaxed...

In order to nurture your own and another's brain, it is natural and optimal to be in your heart. And to this end, there is a step by step approach taught by HeartMath² that builds nurturing skills, and actually, because it is supportive and very crucial to optimal brain development, its evolved design is to help all lives succeed, survival not of the fittest, but of those nurtured.

Darwin's second book is titled *The Decent of Man*. Pearce explains, "In this second work, representing the later and more mature half of his life, Darwin shows how humankind arose through the 'higher agencies of love and altruism.' Selectivity and survival being foundational are retained, but in service of this higher and more complex life-form."³

The optimal functioning of the right/heart and left brain is for everyone, but most have been pulled away by the focus of cultures on left brain processing almost exclusively. There *is* a full and equal function for the left brain, but it is to take its guidance from the heart and the right brain, and then use its linear delineating and organizing skills (shaping skills) that are needed to bring forth the creation from the inspired right/heart brain vision.

The brain, Pearce explains, is to function in a relational manner, and it is nurturing that allows a brain to develop in this way, even bringing back brains to this related functioning when they have been pulled away by influences other than nurturing.

Your children, and most likely you, for the apple does not fall far from the tree, are here, differently oriented, uncommonly wise in many areas, openly sensitive, and they especially, heart centered, because they are here to help bring balancing change. And we are to support those changes, honoring these individuals for who they are, nurturing them, and thereby we becoming more heart centered ourselves.

So, what will your child gain and how will we nurture your child's purposeful open orientation? Through a deepened grasp of all this you will see that your child's abilities and 'disabilities', choices of activities, and rebellions, are due to this open orientation, you also understanding their reactions to overwhelm and toxic intrusion due to lacking a left brain filter and having a sensitive nervous system. Theirs is an orientation and heart centeredness we want to maintain.

To be nurturing and heart centered ripples out to support the heart and appropriate brain functioning of the whole world, leading us to reclaim our relational intelligence or what I have called, connective perception.

Joseph Chilton Pearce:

In our compulsion to make right a fundamentally flawed *logical* (purely left brain) worldview, we lose our connections with and ability to open to the intelligence called for—which is heart-based, not head-based...⁴

Head based thinking is what has brought the preponderance of current world problems, problems created due to our lack of connection to each other and the planet.

In an essay by Charles Eisenstein titled “The Woman Who Chose to Plant Corn,” he shares about a young woman’s choice to return to her culture’s connection to the land, rather than accept the prestigious chance to study at Harvard as one of the few Native Americans there.

He states:

The best and brightest are abandoning the ship, and even those who remain aboard are participating half-heartedly as they sense the inevitable shipwreck. Eventually even going through the motions of complicity becomes intolerable, as our hunger to live a meaningful life draws us towards a new and ancient story of interconnection, interbeing, and social, personal and ecological healing.⁵

And selections from a long paragraph by Dr. Maria Montessori:

The whole labor of life, which fulfills itself subject to its law and brings beings into harmony, reaches consciousness under the form of love (connection)... Yes, the inner guide that leads children to observe what is about them could be described, in Dante’s phrase, as the “intelligence of love.”... It is because the child’s intelligence assimilates by loving, and not just indifferently, that he can see the invisible. This active, meticulous, constant absorption in love is characteristic of children.⁶

Her description of children's innate connective intelligence is the call for our nurturing in order for this to continue. Their intelligence comes from the receptivity of the inner sight of the open heart and right brain.

So, some approaches to support your child, to name a few...

- Minimization of competition in general, and choosing body movement where the action can be individual like in swimming, or Tai Chi (values-based body and heart activity), rather than team sports.

- Connection to nature and animals, if this is a draw, for these are naturally connective experiences, and being with animals can calm one who is heart centered, as these children are.

- Hands-on and passion related activities and pursuits, in whatever realm they love and to which they are drawn.

- Lessened expectations to fit in this world in the usual pathways, except to help them build personal bridges to helpful or like-minded others, and hopefully through their interests and passions, discover their participation and belonging in this world.

- Allowing children to communicate, or not...*however* they are evolving, for often passion, acceptance, and lack of the usual pressure of expectations lead to the freedom to develop speech, and/or other communicating styles. After all, any of these pressures will produce a brain reacting and evolving due to these restrictive influences rather than nurturing.

And part of the practice for you...

- Trusting that all is moving in the right direction.

- Focusing your life on the honoring and support of this individual's life as they are, which will allow your child's brain to grow as designed through connection, interest, and passion. They then will nurture their likes and interests guiding them toward pleasure and even purpose. The nurtured brain is evolved to create successfully, this being a part of the bigger picture for the well-being of all and the planet.

So, in conclusion, we are not to change them but to help weave these loved ones, (our children, our students, or even co-workers), into the world as they are. And how do we do this? By supporting them in the very way that they

are oriented to function, with connective receptivity, their nurturing inclination to help others, and their open heart.

NOTES

¹ Joseph Chilton Pearce, *The Heart-Mind Matrix, How the Heart Can Teach the Mind New Ways to Think* (Rochester, Vermont 2010, 2012), 16-18.

² An Overview of Research Conducted by the HeartMath Institute, *Science of the Heart: Vol. 1 (1993-2001)*, “Exploring the Role of the Heart in Human Performance,” <https://www.heartmath.org/resources/downloads/science-of-the-heart>

and a short reference to heart coherence techniques (more in-depth courses offered) <https://www.heartmath.org/resources/heartmath-tools/quick-coherence-technique-for-adults/>.

³ Pearce, *The Heart-Mind Matrix, How the Heart Can Teach the Mind New Ways to Think*, 10.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 15.

⁵ Charles Eisenstein, “The Woman Who Chose to Plant Corn,” 11 May 2015, accessed 16 October 2018, <https://charleseisenstein.net/essays/the-woman-who-chose-to-plant-corn-2/>.

⁶ Montessori, M., *The Secret of Childhood*, (Notre Dame, IN: Fides Publishers, 1970).