

GREENMONEY[™] JOURNAL

FROM THE STOCKMARKET TO THE SUPERMARKET

Whole Mind Education issue (Winter 08/09)
Issue 70, Volume 17, No. 2

Online at www.greenmoney.com Nov. 24, 2008

Building Emotional Intelligence

By Linda Lantieri

A strong public demand is arising in the US for schools to implement effective educational approaches that promote not only academic success but also enhance health, and prevent problem behaviors. A US poll of registered voters released by the Partnership for 21st Century Skills (www.21stcenturyskills.org) in 2007 reported that 66% felt that students needed a broader range of skills than just the basics of reading, writing and math. 80% said that the skills that students need today to be prepared for the jobs of the 21st century are very different from what was needed 20 years ago

In fact, a growing body of research suggests that helping children develop good social and emotional skills early in life makes a big difference in their long-term health and well-being. In his groundbreaking book *Working with Emotional Intelligence* (1998), Daniel Goleman identified EQ – emotional intelligence – as being as important as IQ in terms of children’s healthy development and future life success. He writes (1998, 19):

“Given how much emphasis schools and admissions tests put on it, IQ alone explains surprisingly little of achievement in work or life. When IQ test scores are correlated with how well people perform in their careers, the highest estimate of how much difference IQ accounts for is about 25 percent. (Hunter & Schmidt 1984; Schmidt & Hunter 1981). A careful analysis though, suggests a more accurate figure may be no higher than 10 percent, and perhaps as low as 4 percent (Sternberg 1996).”

Goleman’s work has helped us understand the importance of emotional intelligence as a basic requirement for the effective use of one’s IQ; that is, one’s cognitive skills and knowledge. He made the connection between our feelings and our thinking more explicit by pointing out how the brain’s emotional and executive areas are interconnected physiologically, especially as these areas relate to teaching and learning.

Brain science tells us that a child's brain goes through major growth that does not end until the mid-twenties. Neuroplasticity, as scientists call it, means that the sculpting of the brain's circuitry during this period of growth depends to a great degree on a child's daily experiences. Environmental influences on brain development are particularly powerful in shaping a child's social and emotional neural circuits. Young people who learn how to calm down when they are upset, for instance, seem to develop greater strength in the brain's circuits for managing distress (Goleman 2008).

In New York City classrooms and elsewhere, teachers are beginning to equip young people with the skills to be aware of and regulate their emotions more effectively. And it seems that the regular practice of these contemplative skills strengthens the brain circuits that underlie emotional regulation. The benefits of such a regular practice can include (Lantieri 2008, 10):

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- Increased self-awareness and self-understanding
 - Greater ability to relax the body and release physical tension
 - Improved concentration
 - The ability to deal with stressful situations more effectively by creating a more relaxed way of responding to stressors
 - Greater control over one's thoughts, with less domination by unwelcome thoughts
 - Greater opportunity for deeper communication and understanding between adults and children, because thoughts and feelings are being shared on a regular basis
-

We, as the adults in children's lives, can't keep telling our children countless times to "calm down" or "pay attention" without providing them with some practical guidelines for how to do so. By offering children systematic practice in techniques that help them pay attention and relax their bodies, we can help them cultivate their budding capacities and facilitate the development of their neural pathways. Teaching these practices to students can increase not only their social and emotional skills, but their resilience: the capacity to not only cope, but thrive in the face of adversity.

Many courageous educators and parents are breaking new ground and teaching children practical ways to calm down and pay attention as a daily part of their school day. A window of opportunity exists right now in society for these kinds of approaches to make their way into homes and schools. It is essential for children to learn new ways to have their spirits uplifted and their inner lives nourished as a normal, natural part of their growing up experience. And as Gandhi prompted, "We have to start with the children."



Article by Linda Lantieri, *Author*

[This article is adapted with permission from: Lantieri L. (2008) *Building Emotional Intelligence: Techniques to Cultivate Inner Strength in Children*. Sounds True, Boulder, CO]

Linda Lantieri, MA is director of The Inner Resilience Program and has 40 years of experience as a teacher and administrator in East Harlem and a faculty member at Hunter College. She is co-founder of the Resolving Conflict Creatively Program (RCCP), widely recognized as an evidenced-based program in social and emotional learning. She may be contacted at The Inner Resilience Program, 40 Exchange Place, Suite 1111, New York, NY 10005; 212/509-0022, ext. 226; fax: 212/509-1095;

website: www.innerresilience-tidescenter.org

website: www.casel.org

email: llantieri@worldnet.att.net

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089 winter volume 17 | issue 2 | number 70

Whole Mind Education

14 not so childish ideas

4 trends

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Ted Ketcham

Guest Editors
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Contributing Writers

Joan Almon | Thomas Armstrong | William Crain
Gayle Davis | Elizabeth Goodenough
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Printer: **Artcraft Printing** 509 323 5266
Design: **Ranch7 Creative** 707 526 1080

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environmental principles."*

— PAUL HAWKEN,
AUTHOR AND SPEAKER

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guest editors' note

A New Paradigm:

Calling for the transformation of childhood education through developmentally-intelligent design

In this issue we're making the case that, society-wide, things are getting better because of four positive education macro-trends: **Holism, Inner Growth, Civil Society, and The Learning Organization**. Even our highly industrialized and regimented educational system which standardizes, alienates and instills helplessness in students, is being transformed into one that instead protects and nurtures children's growing minds.

In our view, we're not just at a crisis point; we're at a *threshold of opportunity*.

There's no one to blame, no good old days to go back to, nothing to fix or save. Why would we want to fix or save a Model T? The old educational paradigm was revolutionary in its time and today, not so much.

The 14 Inspired Educational Transformers in this special issue of *GreenMoney Journal* describe the first steps to a new, civilized educational paradigm—a shift away from systematically making children feel that there is something wrong with them towards a culture of developmentally intelligent learning.

We question the outdated industrial-age framing of education as a commodity—pretending that minds are empty vessels to be filled and measured, rather than fires to be ignited (see articles by Arthur Zajonc and Betty Staley).

The paradigm is shifting. New, flexible, self-organizing approaches to learning run less on rigidity and more on plasticity (like our "neuroplastic" brains say Linda Lantieri and Jane Healy). These new approaches can be recognized and evaluated without invoking "rigor" (as in "knuckle crunching," "tough," and "mortis") Deborah Meier and Ingrid O'Brien suggest. Plasticizing experiences like the arts (Gayle Davis), nature (Richard Louv) and working with animals (William Crain) train our minds to think clearly and flexibly, while seeing with wondering eyes and compassionate hearts.

We noticed that the four positive education macro-trends correspond to the four positive cultural macro-trends which account for the Lifestyles of Health and Sustainability (LOHAS) sector: being Green, socially responsible business, investment and philanthropy, meditation and contemplation (with neuro-scientific proven benefits!), and conscientious individuals as a new sector, "the cultural sector" or "civil society." The conscientious educator takes the social change lead (see article by Ron Miller).

A civilized educational system moves public education and private education to the next level of cooperation. We can cultivate people who weave originality, community, and service into civilization's fabric from generation to generation, as Joan Almon so movingly describes. Like cradle-to-cradle manufacturing, generation-to-generation education doesn't end with graduation. The developmentally intelligent educator is a cultural healer who first, does no harm, (see article by Deborah Meier), wastes no lives, and returns bright, loving and enterprising "nutrients" into the social soil. Let us step up with confidence and be like Betty Staley, Sonja Williams and Elizabeth Goodenough!

We gratefully acknowledge over a decade of support for whole childhood from Susan Kendall Newman/ Paul Newman—Newman's Own with gratitude.

Finally we thank you, Cliff and the *GreenMoney Journal* team for opening your pages and treasured readers to these views.

As the election is over and nation-building begins in America, please forward this issue to everyone you know and start a conversation! Also online at GreenMoney.com you will find an expanded version of this special issue including an exclusive article by Ocean Robbins, founder of Youth For Environmental Sanity (YES!).

— Joan Jaeckel and Eric Utne, Guest Editors

Joan Jaeckel is a thought-change activist for social transformation through intelligent human design.

Email: joan.jaeckel@gmail.com

Eric Utne founded the Utne Reader and is an educational innovator and social entrepreneur.

DEDICATION:

THIS ISSUE IS DEDICATED TO TEN CIVIL SOCIETARIANS, WHO ARE NOT WRITERS HERE,
BUT ARE EXEMPLARY FRIENDS OF CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH:

1. Geoffrey Canada, Harlem Children's Zone
2. Van Jones, author of *Green For All: Building a Green Collar Economy*
3. Dave Eggers, 826 Valencia
4. Rachael Kessler, PassageWays Institute
5. David Orr, Center for EcoLiteracy
6. Deborah Solomon, Resources for Infant Educators (RIE)
7. Wayne Jennings, The International Association for Learning Alternatives
8. Steve Boncheck, Harmony Education Center
9. Craig Kielberger, O Ambassadors
10. Sir Ken Robinson's TED talk, "Do Schools Kill Creativity?"