



THE BRAIN ACADEME'S

Teach to the Brain and the Heart Will Follow™

Personal & Professional Learning Series



A Presence of Safety - Volume 1, Issue 1

Focus On The Essential Strategies to Grow Brain

By Mary C. and Jon D. Appleget

A Very Happy Welcome to All!

On behalf of the entire Teach to the Brain™ team, we want to wish you a very warm and joyous welcome to the Brain Academe™. Thank you for your kindness, support, and commitment to learning, as together we begin and continue to build a global community dedicated to the brain and how it learns.

A Presence of Safety and the Brain *Research and Direction*

The Brain Academe opens its membership program by launching, *Teach to the Brain and the Heart Will Follow™ Personal and Professional Learning Series*. A year long, automated training program focusing on what current brain research shows as the twelve essential **brain responsive** elements for optimal learning and growth. Applying these key elements to the learning environments of today is critical for teachers, parents, coaches and leaders, whose goals focus on developing capable, self-directed, self-reliant people.

The learning series begins with a theme and strategy meant to serve as a foundation for the entire vision and mission of the Brain Academe™. The first volume showcases the theme "A Presence of Safety." *A presence of safety* in the learning environment allows the brain to relax, come off defense mode and move into learning mode. Always keep in mind that the nature of the brain is to first *survive* then *thrive*. The brain attends and connects to new learning much more easily when it perceives itself as safe and in control.

It's also important to remember that the brain is well equipped to protect itself; so well equipped that when presented with a perceived threat, the brain actually prioritizes

and dictates that coping with the threat is first and foremost. A cascade of 'new' chemicals pour out from the brain's system. These chemicals affect everything from body temperature and heart rate to attention and learning. As the brain attempts to learn something new and is interrupted due to the need to pay attention to a threat, it works even harder to maintain a spirit of motivation and desire. First the brain will work to survive. Second, it will work to thrive.

What are the implications for learning?

If the brains we are trying to engage with are sensing a presence of safety, desire goes up and learning proceeds naturally, effortlessly and effectively. If those same brains are sensing a lack of safety, or a presence of threat, guilt or shame, then the brain will, in sheer self defense, shut down less important functions like learning, computing or comprehending for the sake of coping with the perceived threat or danger.

Perceived safety then, must be considered as one of the first and most important needs to be met in the classroom and nurturing environments. We will show you strategies you can master to help the learners perceive you as safe and in control.

As Teach to the Brain and the Heart Will Follow™ Personal and Professional Learning Series moves forward in training, we will tie in healthy brain strategies that are research based, easy and sometimes effortless to apply. Yet, they work very effectively with growing, changing brains. Now, let's begin by...

*Smiling: smiling at them,
smiling with them, smiling for them.*

Brain
Academe's
Vision
Teach to the
Brain and the
Heart Will
Follow™

Mission

By leveraging the power of the worldwide web, the Brain Academe™ will reach the hearts and minds of teachers, parents, coaches and leaders interested in strategies that grow genius brains.

Brain Responsive Strategy of the Week

As the training begins, we start with a powerful and subtle act that can and will affect learning in a number of positive ways. This first strategy we recommend epitomizes the *brain responsive* approach, as its simplicity is overshadowed by the significance of the act itself.

We want you to smile! Right now as you read, smile big and smile happy! If smiling is difficult then hold a pencil between your teeth (not between your lips as this creates a frown) and put your mouth muscles into the shape of a smile!! Make the sound of the long vowel 'e', repeating the 'e' sound over and over. The real beauty of smiling lies in the idea that the brain does not exactly know the difference between a genuine smile or the one you consciously created on your own face.

Conscious Smiling Creates Happy Hormones

It is fair to state that the suggestion of smiling helps develop friendships and influence positively those you learn and work with. Dale Carnegie, in his famous success book, *How to Win Friends & Influence People*, teaches us that "our smile is a messenger of our good will. To someone who has seen a dozen people frown, scowl or turn their faces away, your smile is like the sun breaking through the clouds. Especially when that someone is under pressure from his bosses, his customers, his teachers or parents or children, a smile can help him realize that all is not hopeless-that there is joy in the world."

Current brain research shows us that when learners experience a smile, their brains quickly release chemicals that generate good feelings of hope and joy and they interpret our smiles as safety and security. Neuroscience has discovered that our brain is more than an organ of rational thought, it's an organ that manufactures hundreds of chemicals that have a potent affect on our mood and attention.

Renowned neuroscientist and pharmacologist, Dr. Candace Pert has scientifically documented that intentional smiling, literally using our facial muscles to put on a happy face, triggers specific brain neurotransmitters to shift the balance of the brain's feel-good chemicals to overcome unhappiness. Dr. Pert says when you're happy you are alive and buzzing with "happiness juices," the very real chemicals in your body and brain that are the foundation of your positive experiences.

This research shows evidence that the simple act of smiling, whether it's a fake or heart felt one, signals the brain to release happy hormones. The brain responds. As the muscle structure of your face moves into a smiling position, the brain instantly releases a cascade of 'specific neurotransmitters', serotonin and dopamine for example, that affect the body, mind and mood. These happy hormones can also be ecstatic endorphins

and immune boosting killer T-cells. They instantly affect mood, motivation and learning in very positive ways.

Because of this chemical factory, Dr. Robert Ornstein and David Sobel in their book, *The Healing Brain*, suggest therefore that it is common sense that we use every possible strategy we can that will have a beneficial effect on brain chemistry and reduce our levels of stress, anxiety and depression.

Smile At Them

If smiling puts us at ease and triggers the release of healthy, calming, feel good neurotransmitters, then imagine what it triggers in those that witness our smiles? Smiling sends the message that you're safe, happy, confident and content with yourself.

When parenting, teaching, coaching and leading your intentional smile is not only helping your own body, mind and mood, it is helping those around you. Remember, brain responsive strategies like 'smile' create conscious thinking about thinking. Your smile sends a signal to those in the area that the environment is presently safe and free of harm.

Individuals whom you smile at immediately draw the general conclusions that you are kind. The simple act of smiling relaxes the learner's brain, and takes them off 'defense mode' and shifts them into 'learning mode.' Learners of all types are more likely to follow directions and comply with requests when they perceive the teacher, parent, coach or leader as safe and kind. A simple smile can spread a presence of safety. Genius brains thrive on this!

Smile With Them, Smile For Them

Be aware. Frowning or scowling implies anger or disapproval and releases negative hormones in both the one with the scowl on their face and those that witness the scowl. Understand that smiling and even laughing with your students, your kids, your athletes and your employees can create a very joyful, accepting environment in which the brain thrives. This is a critical awareness needed to create positive change and optimal growth and transformation.

Smiling when you are thinking and talking about the learners sends a POSITIVE message that reaches all types of brains. Those in the area see and feel the support for the individual and for the group. We know that positive messages generate positive chemicals in the brain which assist the learning process. This simple, almost effortless act of smiling while you're with the individuals or talking about them, needs to be put on the top of your priority list. It's how the brain has been working all along. Now, it's up to you to help it run healthier. So, smile. Smile right now and try smiling at times when you might otherwise not. Smile at strangers, smile to yourself, and while you're smiling, think of ways to remind yourself that all brains need a *presence of safety* in order to learn as much as possible.

“Every teacher in the world, whether working with a pre-kindergarten child or a Ph.D. candidate, has the same mission - to bring out the best in the student.”
Professor Erwin G. Hall

Bringing out the best in the student means empowering the student; creating conditions in which the student can act on his or her own behalf, where one can take risks and identify positively to their own self-concept and learning skills.”

Mary Appleget, Educator & Learner

A BRAIN RESPONSIVE LEARNING AND NURTURING ENVIRONMENT

What It Is

- Presence of Safety in Thoughts, Words and Actions
- Positive Affirmations: Visual-Auditory-Kinesthetic
- Positive and Productive Rituals
- Posters and Peripheral Visuals
- Pre-exposure to New Ideas - Also Know as Priming
- The Making Aware of Connections and Patterns
- More Real-Life Artifacts and Objects
- Adequate Time and Schedules for Learning Memory
- A Continually Changing Environment Provided
- Music And The Arts
- Seating And Desk Arrangements Varied
- Movement Strategies Included
- Increased Learner Voice And Input
- Mentor Feed Forward Communication
- High Levels of Positive Feed Forward Communication
- High Levels of Social Interaction

What It Is NOT

- Presence of Threat & Fear In Thoughts, Words & Actions
- Negative Feedback: Visual-Auditory-Kinesthetic
- No Rituals. Negative Behavior
- Sterile, White Walls and No Visuals
- No Exposure to New Ideas, No Questioning, No Asking
- Ignoring Strategies That Help Create Meaning
- No Hands On Objects or Strategies
- Equal, Segmented Learning Sections Unrelated
- Same Old, Same Old Environment
- No Music, No Variety In the Arts
- Assigned Seats In Rows
- No Movement or Interaction With Peers
- No Learner Voice or Input
- No Communication Or Feed Forward Communication
- Low Levels or Absence of Positive Feed Forward Talk
- Little or No Social Interaction

Rationale and Brain Connection By Mary Appleget

“Sometimes your joy is the source of your smile, but sometimes your smile can be the source of your joy.”

rati Nhat Hanh quotes (Vietnamese Writer. b.1926)

As you plan your lessons and prepare for another week of leadership, write down the direction to ‘smile.’ Strategically plan when you will smile ‘on purpose.’ Make a special effort to smile throughout the day. Keep a record of conscious smiles you produced on your face and record them in your gratitude journal. Pay attention to the simple choices and the effects on those around you.

Additionally, know these choices create good feelings in your body. The brain reads these specific physical states and follows up with a dump of positive chemicals. Also, pay close attention to how you physically feel. Identify the patterns of feeling good and smiling. You will learn very quickly that you have the power to control your thoughts. This spreads throughout the body and mind into the nurturing environment. Smiling tells those in the area that the environment is presently safe and free of harm. This relaxes the brain and allows it to shift into *learning mode*. Other brains read the signal and respond accordingly, in this case, with ease and content. As trust builds in this type of environment, learning sky rockets. The desire to **learn** grows each day individuals experience a *presence of safety*. They grow to love learning and look forward to the daily process. For more learning join us by clicking the link below...:)

1. Carnegie. D., *How to Win Friends and Influence People*, Gallery, 1998.
2. Niedenthal P., Mermillod M., Maringer M., Hess U., "The Simulation of Smiles (SIMS) Model: Embodied Simulation and the Meaning of Facial Expression." *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, 2010.
3. Ornstein, R. and Sobel, D., *The Healing Brain*, Touchstone, 1988.
4. Pert, C., *Molecules of Emotion*, Touchstone, 1999.