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<http://www.teachingvalues.com/whymovement.html>

Smart Moves

by Carla Hannaford

Movement is essential to learning. Movement integrates and anchors new information into our neural networks.

Every time we move in an organized . . . manner, full brain activation and integration occurs, and the door to learning opens.

To "pin down" a thought, there must be movement. A person may sit quietly to think, but to remember a thought, an action must be used to anchor it. We must materialize it with words. When I write, I'm making connections with thought by moving my hand.

When we talk about what we've learned, the physical movements internalize and solidify it in nerve networks. Acetylcholine, a neurotransmitter, is released across synapses of activated neurons to stimulate muscle function during talking. (This) . . . stimulates and attracts dendritic growth in the area, thus increasing nerve networks.

Many of us have a distinct tendency to think better and more freely while engaged in a repetitive, low concentration physical task. I've heard people say that they think best when they are swimming laps in a pool, taking a walk, or while shaving.

We have known for years that children who miss the vitally important crawling stage may exhibit learning difficulties. Crawling, a cross-lateral movement, activates development of the corpus callosum (the nerve pathways between the two hemispheres of the cerebrum).

In a study of more than 500 Canadian children, students who spent an extra hour each day in gym class performed notably better on exams than less active children.

Movement facilitates the development of increased blood vessels that carry learning-essential water, oxygen and nutrients to the brain.

From the earliest grades, school children are taught not to move their bodies during class. Breaks should be . . . taken every 7-10 minutes where the eyes can reestablish three-dimensional and peripheral vision in a relaxed way.