



PUZZLE PIECES

Solving the puzzle . . . empowering the child

RUSH NEUROBEHAVIORAL CENTER—SUMMER NEWSLETTER 2007



Helping Your Child Cope with Change

The mom of an intelligent, exuberant eight-year-old girl was explaining the difficulties she was encountering parenting her child who is experiencing neurobehavioral issues.

"I love her so much! She's so bright, sweet, energetic, and charming, but can also be quite quirky. It takes so much energy to get things right. . . . Her home, school, and social environment need to be extremely organized and structured. I communicate with her team of teachers and other important people in her life, so we all have a common understanding of her strengths and weaknesses and try as much as possible to utilize a consistent approach. Getting it all organized can be challenging, but when we do and it's working well . . . she changes, so we need to go back and begin it all again. It can be quite daunting! Does it ever stop?"

For all children, routine development is a series of transitions. However, for "our kids" with neurobehavioral issues, those transitions have a much greater meaning. **These modifications require us to reframe our understanding of the situation, reorganize the environment and then re-educate ourselves and the team of people who work with our child about the impact of and need for adaptations to meet our child's needs.** This process makes developmental milestones, transitions and life changes a huge challenge that requires significant time communication, determination, energy—and lots of love and understanding.

As our patients continue to change and develop, transitions can and do vary in frequency and character, but they continue to require anticipation and management. The transitions from kindergarten to first grade and from high school to college share many elements, yet, there are profound differences.

Twelve years ago, Joanie had a neurobehavioral evaluation while she was in kindergarten, because she talked all the time and couldn't stop moving. She alienated other children by her lack of awareness, invasive behavior, and she also had a hard time with her fine motor skills.

Her family used the information from her neurobehavioral evaluation and started working with a family therapist.

Meryl Lipton, MD, PhD
Executive Director

Creative Intervention: Theatre Offers an Opportunity to Enhance a Young Adult's Social Skills

Jane Stojak

Brian was dejected on our first meeting because his social and romantic life were nowhere. He was dead set against therapy—been there, done that. Although trained as a developmental psychologist, I left my academic career behind many years ago to buy a theater. I have recently been coaching actors in the skills to be comfortable on stage and in meetings with casting directors.

Brian and I met in my theater in Philadelphia. He is an intelligent, personable, warm young man with some obvious social interaction 'issues' and a bit of a speech impediment. He lamented that he never got past a first date. How could he fix that?

While Brian is beyond adolescence, he suffers from what began in his childhood and what I call "Fragile Self-Regard." His social skill deficits have often led to hurt and rejection. One incident from his teenage years was revealing. He sent a note to an attractive girl for a date, approached her in the cafeteria to solicit a response, and was promptly ridiculed by her friends sitting around the lunch table. He learned to avoid tough social situations.

What are those skill deficits? Brian has a slight speech impediment (his "th's" are "f's"); he compulsively repeats certain

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EMILY RUBIN

MS, CCC-SLP

Save the Date

Friday, February 29, 2008

Practical Strategies to Help Children with Brain-Based Social-Emotional Challenges

A full-day symposium focusing on High Functioning Autism Asperger's Syndrome, Nonverbal Learning Disability, and other Social-Emotional Learning Disorders. Hosted by Rush NeuroBehavioral Center and Oakton Community College, Des Plaines, IL.

For more information contact: Rush NeuroBehavioral Center, 4711 W. Golf Road, Suite 1100, Skokie, Illinois 60076, (847) 763-7933.

Back by popular demand — detailed brochures will be mailed in October

Creative Intervention

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phrases; he plays with the soles of his shoes; he has extra-neous hand movements; his eye contact is erratic or very intense; he talks without breaks; he doesn't ask questions or wait for responses; he talks too loudly; he cannot read signals for 'when to stop talking' or 'when to leave.' Conversation, especially with new acquaintances, creates visible anxiety for him.

Brian and I took a very direct approach. I asked what social issue was most pressing at the moment. He said he was anxious about calling a woman for a date and then interacting on that first date. So we role-played a phone conversation and then a first date over coffee.

Over our next several sessions, we identified skills that Brian could work on: democratic conversation; open-ended neutral questions; positive topics; quiet talking; friendly body language; listening; talking "short, not long"; and light-hearted banter. We discussed the process of "Imagine; Observe; Practice; Learn; Enjoy" to build his skill level.

One of the first skills we tackled was "democratic conversation" to counteract Brian's tendency to monopolize conversations. He practices at first in situations with low stakes which were non-threatening. So, we started off with his weekly conversations with his parents.

Brian said that he tends to dominate conversations with his folks, recounting his experiences of the previous week. "Do you ever ask questions or pause?" I said. "No." "Well, let's change that."

He was surprised to report at our next meeting that the conversation freaked his mother out. She immediately thought that something major was wrong until he explained that he was practicing a new skill. But by the next weekly phone call, his mother had recovered and they had a lovely dialogue. And he was ready to apply the skill in high stakes situations like dating.

"Light-hearted banter" is a social skill that endears one person to another. Brian observed a colleague, Bob, who

was very good at joking with co-workers. He overheard this interchange between Bob and a new hire. "You're a VEGAN!" Bob said. "Yes." "So that means you can't each chicken?" "Yes." "And you can't eat beef?" "Yes." And on and on. It was a lighthearted fun interaction, but Brian claimed he was incapable of doing that

So we role-played "light-hearted banter." He surprised and amused himself by performing just fine. That became a new skill to practice.

In each of our meetings, we discuss and analyze his observations, we role-play, we identify new skills, we assign practice, and we enjoy his accomplishments to enhance his self-regard. When he is apprehensive about practicing a new skill, I ask him to just think about doing it—to imagine scenarios in which he uses the skill. Practice can come later. So far, he has made it to the fourth date with one of his new friends, become a regular with a social circle at his neighborhood pub, taken co-workers out to lunch, and been promoted. Needless to say, his self-regard is improving and he is happier.

Target Skills Summary:

- Democratic Conversation
- Open-Ended Neutral Questions
- Positive Topics
- Quiet Talking
- Friendly Body Language
- Listening
- Talking Short, Not Long
- Light-Hearted Banter

Process:

- | | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Imagine (scenarios) • Observe (social interactions) • Practice (new skills) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learn (new skills) • Enjoy! |
|---|--|

More examples in the next newsletter!

Jane Stojak is the founder and executive director of Random Acts of Theater, a theater company in Philadelphia. From 1988 through 1997, Jane (who has a Ph.D. in Psychology) practiced as an organizational development consultant. She and her colleague George DiCenzo have recently developed the Taking Stage Workshops for non-actor professionals based on the principles of being truthful, honest, and imaginative in professional presentations and client interactions.

Will My Child Ever Be Independent?

Joshua F. Mark, LCSW

As parents, it is not uncommon for us to be filled with the burden of worry about how and when our kids “will ever grow up!” When will they stop leaving the bag lunch packed for school, at home? When will they finally figure out to study for Tuesdays’ test earlier than Monday night at 9pm? When will they learn to do their own laundry . . . and actually do it! Worrying about teenagers with neurobehavioral issues transitioning successfully to adulthood can be fraught with even more worry. It is often because these kids are dependent on their parents in a more complicated way.

My mentor on these developmental matters, RNBC’s Joe Palombo, calls this unique type of dependence “Compli-mentarity.” Attuned parents fill the void as required to help their kids function well in the world. Serving in some ways like an auxiliary brain, they help in specific ways that might be recommended in a neuropsychological evaluation, (like previewing a new setting before engaging in an activity there), or ways that just naturally spring from just being the expert on what their own kids needs. They know, for example, that they should be nearby when their 9 year old is playing with a particular neighbor . . . because they often struggle when changing to a new game or activity. A neighbor or friend may criticize these parents, and might say, “Just leave them alone . . . they’ll figure it out. You’re too involved!” Well, parents of kids with brain-based issues are unfortunately accustomed to this type of criticism.

In adolescence, weaning away from this type of embedded support is a challenge. It calls for increased awareness about genuine and developing strengths and the frank realities of neurological weaknesses. Kids often can get help sorting this out with their parents, and with certain professionals. The helping professional who “gets it” knows about your child’s brain as well as their thoughts and feelings. They may be best able to help you be more conscious of the issues at hand with your particular child, where as the advice often shared at a typical school PTA sponsored lecture, or in a parenting magazine may be of limited use.

As a social worker, I try to work collaboratively to help identify the obstacles interfering with developing independent skills, and to engage the teenager in a way to help them be more self-aware and honest with themselves. This requires being as direct as possible. Parents must be a part of this conversation too. Trade notes with the helping professionals to keep the goals and objectives for independent functioning challenging, and engaging, but do-able.

To Drive . . . or Not to Drive

Ariel, now age 17 1/2, wanted to finally get a license and drive! With pent-up demand, she railed against her parents “for this right, that was being denied” her. Her parents felt she wasn’t mature enough to handle the responsibility, and worried if she could manage both her attention, and her emotions behind the wheel. This concern was reinforced from the tumultuous driving experiences thus far, with her learning permit. When Ariel appeared distracted while driving, her parents would criticize her and she would scream back at the top of her lungs. Her actual driving skills developed very slowly, and everyone was miserable. For a while, all parties gave up on each other.

As the dust settled, Ariel was able to disclose her true worries about driving. Not wanting to admit this to her parents, she feared having a horrible accident. “They already think I’m a basket case,” Ariel glumly confided.

We openly discussed her anxiety about driving. Then we were able to talk frankly about managing it all. Ariel was able to use cognitive-behavioral tools to help manage her anxiety, and other pragmatic tools to stay focused in the car. These techniques were similar in nature to what she learned to do to cope with taking tests at school. Ariel sadly accepted that unlike her friends, she couldn’t listen to the car audio system, (excellent as it is) while driving, and her cell phone must be used for emergencies only. This more serious approach was kind of a drag, but helped her feel less anxious. She’s back on the road, this time with a driving instructor, and progressing with her ability. Now able to give voice to her anxiety, Ariel told me she doubts she’ll ever feel confident enough to drive on the Eden’s Expressway. “You can get everywhere in the world without driving on the Eden’s,” I responded, “and next year you can decide if you want to take on the Expressways.”

Freddy, on the other hand, came to the firm conclusion that driving was not going to be his thing. Spatial issues, motor control, and processing speed were not his strong suit, and the inherent unpredictability of traffic was just too much. Similarly, although he eventually rode a bike at age 11, he couldn’t imagine really using it to get around. Instead he focused his energies on learning the mass transit system. In the same way he learned all about dinosaurs at age 6, and the biographical facts of the Presidents at around 11, he now focused in a more adaptive way, on absorbing the CTA, RTA, and Metra. We worked on the social skills involved, and a multitude of “what-if’s.” He practiced, with his older brother and parents, and now at age 23 is quite the man about town. Although he walks to work, he travels the rails and bus lines with aplomb, and glories in the independence it affords him.

Competence is an actual ability, but also a feeling, and integrally linked to what independent functioning actually is.

CENTER SPOTLIGHT

RNBC is happy to welcome two new professionals to the Education Department



DENISE WINTER
Coordinator
RNBC Tutoring Center

currently working with the rest of the Educational Services Department staff at RNBC to develop, organize and coordinate intervention services and curriculum for use in the tutoring program.

Mrs. Winters is especially excited about her role in organizing and coordinating the expanded summer Executive Function tutoring schedule. Beginning the week of June 11th and continuing throughout June, RNBC will offer tutoring sessions designed to deliver the Executive Functioning Curriculum to students grouped according to grade level. This unique approach will emphasize a mini-course in Executive Functioning to students entering grades five through high school in order to better prepare them for the upcoming school year. Accessing this information during the summer months can be an especially effective way for students to learn at a time when they are free from school pressures and, therefore, more available to focus on these Executive Function skills. Denise is looking forward to working with these different student age groups. (See information on summer tutoring program in this newsletter, page 11)

Before coming to RNBC in December of 2006, Denise spent 34 years with the Chicago Public Schools, working both as a classroom teacher and administrator. In June of 2005, she retired after serving as the Principal of Stone Scholastic Academy, a Chicago magnet school. As Principal, Mrs. Winter focused on literacy, incorporating a variety of literacy programs into the curriculum. Several examples include; "Principal's Book Chat", a lunch and group discussion about specific books as well as "I Read to the Principal", where students write their own books and share them with the Principal.

DENISE WINTER, recently joined RNBC as Coordinator of the RNBC Tutoring Program. In this capacity, Mrs. Winters contacts parents and professionals to provide information about the tutoring services in Executive Functions for students. These services support students' developing organizational, time management, and study skills. Students meet both individually and in small groups. Denise's responsibilities also include making presentations informing parent and school professional groups about the RNBC tutoring program. Mrs. Winters is also

Denise continues to pursue her passion for education and reading. She is a mentor for new principals in Chicago. In addition, she serves on the Board of Directors for Literacy for All of Us, a foundation-based organization that promotes reading and literacy among high-risk adolescent girls. She also works in the Evanston Women's Club, in the Community Outreach Program, to provide books for children visiting the pediatric clinic of Evanston Hospital. So far, they have donated over 500 books to the clinic.

After earning an M.Ed. degree from Loyola University and administrative certification from Northeastern Illinois University, Denise participated in the Institute for Chicago Principals from the University of Chicago, the Principal's Center at Harvard University and a program on educational leadership at Northwestern University. In 2001, Denise received the Outstanding Leadership Award for Principals from Chicago Public Schools. Additionally, under her leadership, Stone Academy received a Golden Spike Award from the State of Illinois, for closing the gap for low-income students.

In her free time, Denise pursues several active hobbies. She plays tennis and golf, takes frequent bike rides and works out at the local health club. She also enjoys reading, traveling with her husband, and spending time with her family.



SARAH MINTON
Educational Specialist
RNBC Education Dept.

SARAH MINTON recently joined the RNBC team as an Educational Specialist in December of 2006. Mrs. Minton works within the Education department developing executive function curriculum for grades K-5. She works with the team to implement the executive functions curriculum within the classroom as a liaison for in-school and after-school programming. Mrs. Minton provides individualized remediation programming for children's social and academic skills through executive function tutoring at RNBC as well. Mrs. Minton is looking forward to being a part of professional development workshops which guides teachers towards a better understanding of supporting executive functions skills within their own classroom. As a graduate of Washington University in St. Louis, Mrs. Minton majored in Educational Studies and Psychology. Upon completion of her undergraduate degree, she was a second grade teacher at the Chicago International Charter School-Wrightwood Campus. At CICS-Wrightwood Mrs. Minton became involved in efforts to

Center Spotlight

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advocate for literacy education. While teaching she wrote and was a recipient for several grants from Donors Choose which resulted in a leveled classroom library allowing students to take books home when they otherwise wouldn't have resources. Mrs. Minton was a 2006 Rochelle Lee Fund grant recipient which allowed her to participate in three professional development workshops on reading and writing for grades K-8. In addition to this, The Rochelle Lee Fund grant gave her the opportunity to select \$800 in books to add to her classroom library.

Mrs. Minton will complete a Masters degree in Teaching from Dominican University in July of 2007. Currently enrolled in an Educational Research class, she is working on a research proposal that will incorporate her work with RNBC. As executive functions skills are an

important resource for many students and professionals alike, Mrs. Minton is interested in the relationship between the executive function skills a teacher possesses with the executive functions skills of his/her students. She is hypothesizing that the more executive functions skills that are present within a teacher's classroom systems the more likely the students will incorporate these skills independently inside and outside of the classroom. This research could possibly point to the need for teachers participating in professional development workshops to executive functions skills within the classroom.

In her free time, Sarah loves to visit her family back home in Dallas, Texas and considers herself one of The House Theatre of Chicago's biggest fans.

Helping Your Child Cope with Change

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They also gained a greater understanding of Joanie's neurobehavioral strengths and weaknesses combined with management techniques that they used at home and her teachers used in school. Collectively, these efforts went a long way to help Joanie optimize her functioning. Things went well and kindergarten ended on a very positive note. Joanie was learning, behaving, and she made a friend or two.

Summer plans were well underway when off to summer day camp Joanie went early one July morning. Two hours later her mom's telephone rang. Joanie was out of control . . . she was having a difficult time transitioning from her schedule at home to this new camp experience. "Please come and get her", said the camp counselor. Oops! The camp structure was different, the kids were new and

different, and the counselors were without a framework of understanding the needs of this particular camper.

Through this overwhelming experience, Joanie's mom learned to anticipate transitions. And now it was time for Joanie to learn that important lesson too.

This fall Joanie will be heading off to college far away from home. During her visit to RNBC this spring, she asked me to help her by reviewing a list of things she was planning to do to assist in her preparations for living away from home.

After reviewing her list, I was able to see that Joanie did in fact begin to anticipate her own needs in relation to this important transition. She was able to take some responsibility for her own destiny. Transitions are part of all of our lives, and how we deal with them can have significant ramifications. We must realize that they just take a little extra planning for "our kids".



TIPS FOR SCHOOL SUCCESS

JULIE GIDASPOW AND DEL WALKER

	HIGH SCHOOL	COLLEGE
Develop Good Study Habits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Find a quiet place to study away from distractions Organize the area with necessary materials Make a weekly study schedule Study in 20-30 minute blocks with short breaks in between Review class notes within 24 hours of taking them 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Find a place to study outside of the dormitory (library or student center) Make a weekly study schedule Study in 45-60 minute blocks with short breaks in between Review class notes within 24 hours of taking them filling in missing information using text books or other resources Write down library hours Write down phone numbers and hours of operation of all resource center (writing and math centers)
Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Write all important dates into their planner (birthdays, holidays, vacations, after-school activities) Write a detailed explanation of homework in their planner and list the books and materials needed to complete each assignment Write down test and project dates in their planner Keep all homework to be completed in a specific place Color code the materials for each subject (binder, notebook, folder) Prioritize what homework assignments should be done first, second, etc. keeping in mind due dates, difficulty, and interest level 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Write all important dates into their planner (birthdays, holidays, vacations, extra-curricular activities) Write a detailed explanation of homework in their planner and list the books and materials needed to complete each assignment Write all important deadlines into planner (tests, projects) using provided syllabi Color code the materials for each subject (binder, notebook, folder) Keep all homework to be completed in a specific place Prioritize what homework assignments should be done first, second, etc. keeping in mind due dates, difficulty, and interest level
Preparation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> During the summer take a walk through the school to familiarize your child with the building Discuss school policies and expectations Set up school routines (ex. morning routines, drop off and pick up) Keep communication open (ex. new friends, new peer pressures, etc.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> During the summer or orientation take extra time to familiarize with campus, “walking” your child’s daily schedule Discuss school policies and expectations Keep communication open (ex. new friends, new peer pressures, academic performance, comfort level with new autonomy)



Executive Functioning Workshops

INTERMEDIATE SCHOOL STUDENTS (entering grades 5 and 6)

June 11- June 14, 2007
Time: 3:30 p.m. – 5:30 p.m.

MIDDLE SCHOOL / FRESHMAN STUDENTS (entering grades 7, 8, 9)

June 18-21, 2007
Time: 3:30 p.m. – 5:30 p.m.

HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS (entering grades 10, 11, 12)

June 25-28, 2007
Time, Session 1: 9:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.
Time, Session 2: 3:30 p.m. – 5:30 p.m.

LOCATION: Rush NeuroBehavioral Center
4711 West Golf Road, Suite 1100
Skokie, Illinois 60076

CONTACT: Denise Winter, (847) 763-7947

COST: The cost of each workshop is
\$450.00, including materials

The workshops will develop strategies in:

- Organizational Skills
- Time-Management Strategies
- Planning and Scheduling
- Goal Setting
- Note-Taking Approaches
- Test Prep Strategies

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Talking to Camps about Your Child's Neurobehavioral Difficulties

Leslie Baer-Cohen

With summer right around the corner, many parents are actively exploring summer programs for their children. As a child psychologist, one of the more common questions that I hear from parents during this process is, "What, if anything, should I tell my child's counselor/camp about his/her neurobehavioral problems?" For many parents, a tension exists between wanting to make their child's camp experience a positive one and at the same time worrying that telling a camp about their child's vulnerabilities will somehow be stigmatizing. Although one size never fits all in the world of children with neurobehavioral difficulties, the following guidelines may serve as useful pointers:

1. Be proactive — Ask questions

Before making a final selection on a camp, you should be prepared to ask very specific questions about how the camp is run. Find out who will be working with your child, how old they are, what kind of training they have had and how behavior problems are handled. The following questions also are helpful to ask: How much structure does the camp provide? What is the adult:child ratio? Has the camp worked successfully in the past with children who have had similar difficulties? What kinds of options exist for a one-on-one aide? What is the camp's philosophy? Is it competitive? If camp personnel are unable to answer these questions to your satisfaction, it is probably not the best place for your child.

2. Define the problem

Most good camps will want to know as much as possible about your child's strengths and vulnerabilities. Generally speaking, knowledge is empowering. Give the staff a true and honest account of your child's special needs (e.g., level of inattention/hyperactivity; motor problems; language problems; trouble with peers; previous experience with camp). Make sure they know this is something you consider to be important. You can help educate the staff by spending time with them and answering and asking questions before you drop off your child. Rather than simply giving a label that is open to interpretation, it is often more helpful to provide specific behaviors that your child is likely to exhibit. For instance, instead of just saying "My child has ADHD," it may be more helpful to say, "My child has ADHD, which means that his ability to pay attention for extended periods is not as strong as others his age."

3. Offer ideas

When discussing your child's special needs, offer some easy-to-implement strategies that you have found to be helpful. Enlist help from your child's teachers and other specialists (e.g., speech/language, therapist, psychologist, occupational therapist). At the same time, provide some predictions about what types of activities at camp may be the most challenging for your child (e.g., unstructured time, overstimulating activi-

ties, getting dressed after swimming, lunch) so that the counselor can take a proactive stance. Remind the counselor about the importance of positive reinforcement, close supervision, and appropriate boundaries and consequences.

4. Provide references

Don't assume that camp staff will understand exactly what your child's neurobehavioral disorder entails. Provide some simple and direct printed information stating what the problem is and how it may manifest at camp. It is considerably more likely that teenage counselors will read a one-page summary than a book and a mountain of papers. If your child is taking medication and will be attending sleep-away camp, be sure to provide the phone number of the child's prescribing physician. In addition, provide the staff with a list of emergency phone numbers and email addresses, and make sure they know how to reach you at all times during your child's camp stay.

5. Keep in touch

Check in with your child's counselor on a regular basis to see how things are going. Give them permission to tell you about any problems right away, and work collaboratively with them to resolve the situation. If counselors are willing, send a report form that can be checked off and returned to you each day. Be sure to read any information sent home from camp and respond promptly with questions.

Rush NeuroBehavioral Center presents . . .

A GROUP FOR SIBLINGS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

A support group for brothers and sisters of special needs children. Weekly 1-hour meetings with a trained therapist to provide a forum for siblings of special needs children.

I am embarrassed by my brother or sister in public.

- Do I have to go to his/her appointment?
- Other kids are making fun of him/her at school, what should I do?
- Sometimes I am very angry with him/her

This group will help children deal with these issues and provide coping strategies to deal with the feelings they have. It will be informative, and fun for your children.

For further information, please contact
Jonathan Levin, LCSW, at 847-763-7958

RESEARCH

Can Social Success Be Predicted?

Is there a test that will determine how well my child interacts with peers? What do these tests mean in the “real world”? To my child’s future relationships?

Clark McKown and Laura M. Wood

At RNBC, we commonly meet children who have difficulty making friends and gaining acceptance from their peers. When any child is struggling socially, we use a variety of strategies to try to understand where the child’s social problems originate and what we can do to help. For example, for several years, we have routinely administered a battery of tests measuring children’s ability to read nonverbal cues, understand and use language to achieve social goals, and solve social problems. Some of those tests assess children’s ability to infer what someone is feeling from their facial expression or tone of voice. Some involve looking at and trying to remember faces. Some involve identifying and solving hypothetical social problems. We have traditionally interpreted these tests in a straightforward manner—if children perform well on these tests, they have sufficiently well-developed social thinking skills to make and keep friends; if children do not perform well, this may interfere with their peer relationships.

Does test performance reflect real life? While this is an important question until recently, we have not had the evidence we needed to know whether a child’s performance on these tests is related to their social functioning in the “real world.” We viewed this as an opportunity to learn about our own practices, and so we set about reviewing, with parent permission, our clinical charts to understand how well these tests do their job. We included in the study 126 five to seventeen year-old children who were tested at RNBC between 2003 and 2005 who completed some or all of the tests from our social-emotional cognition battery. Parents and teachers of all of children in the study had also completed a very detailed questionnaire that included information about the child’s social functioning. The data in our charts provided a perfect opportunity to see whether children’s test performance was related to their social functioning outside the clinic(in real life). We did this by evaluating whether test scores were correlated with parent and teacher report of social functioning.

This study taught us important lessons about the usefulness of our social emotional cognition battery. We learned, for example, the better a child does on any of the tests, the better they are likely to do in the “real world.” We also learned that some the tests of pragmatic language, which involves using language to achieve social goals, and social problem-solving, were strongly predictive of social functioning., When the tests of social emotional cognition were used to predict who in the study was doing average or better socially, this combination of tests accurately predicted social functioning about 75% of the time.

What we take from this is that the social emotional learning test battery we have used is helpful clinically, and there is room for improvement. Specifically, we believe there are better tests of the things we are already assessing such as nonverbal sensitivity ((being able to read facial expressions and tone of voice) and there are tests available of a broader range of social emotional learning skills. Unfortunately, few of the tests we had in mind have been evaluated to understand their clinical usefulness. To address these needs, we are currently in the process of field-testing a broad range of tests of social emotional learning in an elementary school aged sample of typically developing children. Stay tuned: in the next Puzzle Pieces, we will offer a first glimpse of what we have learned from this exciting venture.

For the complete article, see McKown, C. (2007). Concurrent validity and clinical usefulness of several individually administered tests of children’s social-emotional cognition. *Journal of Clinical Child and Adolescent Psychology*, 36 (1), 29–41, at this web address <http://www.jccap.net>.



MASTER PIECES

SELECTIONS FROM CHILDREN AND YOUNG ADULTS SHARING THEIR GIFTS

MOORE WISDOM

Greg Moore a high school senior and has been connected to RNBC's services for almost 10 years. Greg is looking forward to the challenges ahead as he makes his decision about where to attend college. Before he goes, we asked him to reflect on what he has learned about himself and what advice he would offer students transiting from middle to high school.

Here are his comments:

- “Get behind the assignment. By that I mean, do your work ahead of time. Make sure you have good grades. If not, it can have dire consequences. I still feel the consequences from the choices I made at the start of high school.”
- “Go out with a “Do It” attitude.”
- “Have a system. If you don’t, everything gets crazy.”
- “Hold on to your graded work. You never know when you’ll need to show it again.”
- “Have a plan set out when you do your home work. It’s okay to make some exceptions but stay pretty darn close to what you plan to do.”
- “Find a balance between doing things you like to do and doing your homework.”
- “Have an escape plan if you get too stressed out. Do something that relaxes you. Videos, books comics, and movies are good ways to relax. Careful with what kind of activity you choose, though. Video games don’t help. They can actually make you more revved up.”
- “Get to groups or camps and anything that goes along those lines because it helps with making friends and social skills.”

TEEN SOCIAL PROGRAM 2007

**June 12–15 and June 19–22
2:00–5:00 p.m. each day**

The program session runs for both weeks for a total of 8 days, 3 hours/day

This group experience is designed for high-school aged boys and girls (entering freshman through seniors), with a history of social-emotional learning issues. Together, we work to create an environment to support self-awareness, increase social skills, coping strategies, and personal change in a peer supported environment. We aim to have fun while exploring and engaging in a variety of group experiences that promote a sense of inclusiveness and increased social competence.

This is the fourth year we are offering this successful concentrated summer program. Joshua Mark, LCSW, and Jonathan Levin, LCSW, will lead the program assisted by graduate students from the Family Institute at Northwestern University.

If this group sounds right for someone you know, contact Nadine Wengroff, RN, at Rush Neuro-Behavioral Center, 847-763-7944.

UPCOMING EVENTS

PARENT CONNECTIONS

June 20, July 18, August—no gathering
September—TBA (check website for RNBC updates)

Parent Connections is held at: Rush NeuroBehavioral Center
4711 West Golf Road, Suite 1100
Skokie, Illinois 60076

Parents of children with neurobehavioral disorders often face many challenges unique to having children with these special needs. While a supportive friend or sympathetic family member is always appreciated, it can be helpful to talk with others in similar circumstances. That's why Parent Connections was formed. There is no fee to participate in this program.

CHICAGO PUBLIC LIBRARY PARTNERSHIP

RNBC is committed to increasing knowledge and awareness about neurobehavioral disorders through community outreach. A partnership with the Chicago Public Library (CPL) has been a successful way to disseminate accurate information and resources to people who would not otherwise have the opportunity to learn about neurobehavioral issues and how they impact children/students. Our current library series will be held at the Sulzer Regional Library, 4455 N. Lincoln Ave., Chicago. These events are free and open to the public. For information call Adult Services at 312-747-4252 or Cate at 847-763-7933. CPDU credits are available.

The library lecture series is on summer hiatus and will resume at Sulzer in September. Please check our website for details.

OTHER EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

August 2-3, 2007

Dr. Meryl Lipton will present at the 7th Annual Summer Institute on Neurodevelopmental Disorders at California State University, Sacramento. This event is sponsored by UC Davis M.I.N.D. Institute and California State University. For registration information, please see website: www.ucdmucdavis.edu/mindinstitute/events/index.html

October 11-12, 2007

Dr. Meryl Lipton will be presenting at the 21st Annual Conference of the Illinois Dyslexia Association at Drury Lane Conference Center, Oakbrook Terrace, IL. For registration information, please see website: <http://www.readibida.org/>

TUTORING SERVICES AT RNBC

RNBC offers tutoring in Executive Function skills for children in elementary, secondary, and higher educational settings. Most tutoring sessions take place at the Center during after-school hours. Tutoring sessions address issues related to organizational and time management concerns, often within an academic context.

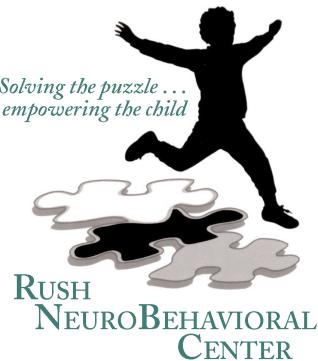
It's not too early to be thinking about summer learning support. Summer can be an optimal time for students to learn and develop better practices in the areas of organizational skills and time management strategies. RNBC will be putting together a schedule of offerings for summer tutoring in Executive Function skills. Students will be able to sign up for individual or group sessions during the months of June and July 2007.

For more information, please call Georgia Bozeday, Director of Educational Services, at 847-763-7959.

RUSH UNIVERSITY MEDICAL CENTER

Rush NeuroBehavioral Center
4711 W. Golf Road, Suite 1100
Skokie, IL 60076

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My Child Has a Diagnosis . . . Why Should I Consider a Re-evaluation?

Many parents believe that after a child enters high school, the need for a comprehensive evaluation is no longer needed. However, sophomore year is typically an important time for teens to be re-evaluated. The parts of the brain associated with executive functioning (e.g., planning, organization) and processing speed, continue to develop through early adulthood. As a result, changes in these areas (either positive or negative) can be determined through an evaluation. More importantly, an updated comprehensive evaluation can help with ACT/SAT examinations and college planning. To qualify for accommodations for the ACT/SAT examinations (e.g., extended time, small group setting, frequent breaks, multiple testing dates), your teen's assessment must be current (diagnostic testing must have taken place within 5 years) and include specific tests. Additionally, the updated evaluation can facilitate finding a college that best "fits" your child's learning style. There are many universities in the country that recognize learning differences and provide continued support for college students. For more information on SAT accommodations, please visit www.collegeboard.com or ACT accommodations, please visit www.act.org/aap/disab/.



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