

The Chocolate Biscuit Meditation

Read this meditation and at the end of **each** line, pause and 'just notice' two things:

- what is your internal dialogue is saying?
- what do you 'just notice' in your body?

Mmmmmm, yum ...

Chocolate biscuits.

Let me at them!

The whole packet, how lucky is that?

I buy them by the carton so they are always there. That way I never run out.

You think I shouldn't eat so many? Not good for me you say?

You're wrong. Chocolate biscuits are good for you, they have scientifically proven that there are beneficial substances in cocoa, so there you go.

So all these kill-joys who want to regulate school tuck shops and tax sugar and fat based foods - get a life!

You think I'm being cavalier with my life?

Chocolate biscuits don't kill you.

Not if you don't eat them all the time anyway.



There is a lot going on in this meditation. The issues of pleasure and pain, loss and gain are right up there in front, along with our human talent for justification. If we have to defend ourselves and our choices, we are able to come up all sorts of supporting arguments that allow us to **unconsciously** follow our pursuit of easy pleasure, even when it is detrimental to us in the long term big picture. Right now, the biggest single issue on this beautiful planet is one that affects our relationship not with food, but with the Earth herself. When you are aware you will hear all the same justifications for 'business as usual' even though the long term projections are similarly headed for the 'flat line'.

In our children's lives, and in our own, there are a lot of "chocolate biscuits" to be aware of, items or activities that give us pleasure in the pleasure centres of our brain, and which do not nourish us at every level of our being as we are designed to be nourished. This "nourishment" is what enables us to grow, to literally materialise into our sacred inner

blueprint of human greatness. If a person *were* to live exclusively on chocolate biscuits there would be a lot of nutrients that they would miss out on, nutrients that their body needed to grow and develop, and maintain the health required for human greatness. Mallowpuffs and toffee pops are fine for a treat, but not as the mainstay of a diet.

In childhood (and arguably in adulthood), the most tempting and hard to resist “treats” are the plethora of commercial toys that entertain us, toys that give us the quick “sugar fix” and no nourishment. Listen carefully when you hear people defending their addiction to these toys and you will notice the same categories of justification as in the biscuit meditation:

- It won't kill you, at least it doesn't do you any harm - (it's not fatal)
- I'm still here and there's nothing wrong with me - (here's proof)
- The content/method teaches you amazing stuff - (here are the benefits)
- It's so much fun, what is wrong with having fun? - (you are a spoil sport and Luddite*)
- Fun has been scientifically proven to be good for you - (and science agrees with me)

Flat Earth Flat Screen Society

The most debilitating of toys for human development and growth is television, and the screen devices which have followed in its wake. For children, screens are disastrous in their effects if used as the staple diet rather than as a treat. Ignoring both the **content** (although that is a factor in socialisation especially) and the **medium** and the effects it has at the physiological level on the human organism (many and addictive), lets just look at **time**. Time spent in front of screens takes away the waking hours the human child needs to map in and develop two critical areas required for proficiency in their future physical, social, intellectual, creative and spiritual endeavours. While statistics are never “the Truth” they do give an indication of what is going on, and some of the statistics around screens are sobering. Statistics in the presentation “Shift Happens” by Karl Fisch state that in 2006 in America 21 year olds had watched 20,000 hours of television, played 10,000 hours of video games, spent 10,000 hours on cell phones, sent 250,000 emails or instant messages, and 50% of them had created content for the world wide web. That's a lot of time in a virtual world, the equivalent of more than five full time traditional apprenticeships and none of it in the “real world”.

Healthy body, healthy mind

There are two critical things children must grow and develop if they are not to be starved of the nourishment which nurtures human greatness, the first is their bodies and second is their imaginations. Growth in the body is not only about input - food and drink, growth in the body requires output - development in balance, skills, proficiency and delight in the capabilities of the body, that temple which houses the Spirit of the Child. We all know that when someone has a stroke parts of the body are impaired. The body-brain is a single unit and development and skill in the body has corresponding growth at the neurological (brain),

*Luddite: named for British textile workers opposed to new technology, who rioted and broke factory machinery between 1811 and 1816.

psychological, emotional and spiritual levels. Observe any 'body' watching TV and notice just how many skills they are developing. For many children, their hours in front of a screen are combined with long periods of enforced sitting, and hours of enforced immobility in restraining devices. All this immobility means that they miss the windows-of-opportunity for growing their bodies - and brains - optimally.

Have body, can dance

We all know the expression "use it or you lose it" and so some of us dance or walk, cycle or garden, kayak or go to the gym. We find way that we enjoy to keep our bodies and our spirits healthy. Those of us who don't move from a sitting position *do* know that when we make the effort we feel better (once the stiffness fades), better in body, mind and soul. But what if you didn't develop body proficiency in the first place? What if when you could have been responding to those Subtle Energies of Life coursing through your body urging you to climb, jump, roll down the hill, skip, turn somersaults, stand on your head, go round and round and round and drop down dizzy and look at the clouds spinning ... what if you were watching "The Simpsons" instead? The full sensory richness of motion, emotion, balance, sensory input, gravitational pull, centrifugal force, in a field of reflected light (that our brains have evolved for over fifty million years rather than radiant light) and an equivalent field of sound (rather than the digital offering) is exchanged for entertainment. By the nature of the medium, screen entertainment can never deliver the response in growth and development that answering the call of the Urges-of-Life-Wanting-To-Be-Expressed through body and mind does. By its nature, all screen entertainment is a chocolate biscuit. No exceptions.

Have mind, can imagine

Most adults think that is a no-brainer, of course you can imagine if you are a person. Wrong. There are now children in schools all over the planet who cannot imagine, and this is a new phenomenon which has arisen in the last half of last century. Every human baby does come onto the planet with the *capacity* to imagine - but the ability to imagine is a skill that the child will acquire when the conditions are right. There is a window of opportunity when the conditions are right for the child - and the child had better hope that the grown-ups he or she lives with don't live on "chocolate biscuits", because the child under seven years old needs is as little television as possible. As little television as is possible is actually none, and none is the ideal and here is why.

Building a body of knowledge

Your brain stores complex "images", images which are actually multidimensional. That means the image has encoded within it emotional, colour, texture, shape, sound, smell, touch, temperature, air pressure, humidity, motion components (and more). These are stored while you are having the multi-dimensional experience. You know how reliable this multidimensional memory is when you look at your holiday photos - back come the smells, the weather, the temperature, the air pressure, the tastes, the sounds, how you felt and

more. (It's also why other people's holiday photos don't do it for you.) The photo is the trigger - *stimulus* - for your brain to open the memory package and give you the *response*. The brain is designed to do this elegantly. The child's growing developing brain needs lots of **real life** multidimensional experiences to build up a **body of knowledge** about this world. It is sensory nourishment of the highest order - (and I wonder if the overeating which is so prevalent among children and young adults is compensatory for the lack of sensory nourishment for the mind-brain-body system.) The richness of real experience is the treasure that the developing child's mind-brain-body craves, and it is this treasure which becomes the basis for the alchemy of imagination.

Rich or impoverished

Children who live and play on rubbish dumps in India and the Philippines have been observed to have richer inner lives and play lives than the children traditionally categorised as rich - that is our children with their cell phones, iPhones, computers, a TV in their bedroom, plus a gallery of DVDs and computer games. "How can that be?" we might ask if we don't understand that true richness requires a healthy 'bank account' of 'Treasure in the Brain', deposited regularly during real, rich, three dimensional experiences. We also need to understand that contentment and satisfaction are the result of a **two way dynamic**, not a one way dead end. You put something in you get something out, or *stimulus* and *response*, just what the human system is **designed for** and **loves**. So how come children are richer on rubbish dumps then?

Imagination is creation

It works like this. When I say the word "tree" - *the stimulus* - your brain has already responded by opening a memory package - *the response* - which could be rich or simply serviceable. Your brain will have created an image of the tree almost instantly, and created it from your experience of trees. When I say "hen", same thing. Your brain responds with an image, based on your experience. Say a child has had experience of collecting hen eggs from under a hen, there will be megabytes of information stored. Information which will include the temperature of the day, the egg, the hen's feathers, the excitement or nervousness during the venture, the colours and textures of the feathers, the comb, the nesting material, the smells of the hen house, the hen and the egg, the movements the hen makes, the way she blinks, how that funny little membrane eyelid goes, the sounds she makes ... and that is just scratching the surface. Such a child will have more to call on and create from than the child who's only experience of hens is from the Discovery Channel.

Brain impaired

The child who spends all of their time watching the Discovery Channel is not only *not* going to learn the basics about hens, worse is in store. At the time when the window of opportunity is open for the child to learn to open the memory packets stored in the brain and create with them - *stimulus and response in an ongoing dynamic* - the Television voice

over gives *the stimulus* “The hen is broody” and instantly supplies the image, *the response*. There is nothing for the brain to respond to. The whole creative cycle is now dead. That’s why when you put an electro-encephalograph on someone watching TV it reads next to brain dead. Too much of this at the critical window of time and **the brain does not develop the ability to provide a response to a stimulus**. Read that last sentence again and really get what the magnitude of the damage is for these children. We have them in New Zealand, and they have been rendered ineducable, they cannot follow what the teacher is on about, no images, nothing. They do have to keep their nervous systems stimulated though, and they will be doing *anything* physical to know they are alive, and be in constant trouble for responding to the life energy they can bring into form.

One person’s rubbish, another person’s treasure

If, however, you are up on the rubbish dump and your brother says, “You can bring your elephant over here, and we’ll get it ready for the festival”, not only does your brain respond with images of elephants and festivals, now you have to bring the in-form-ation to life in the ongoing creational dance of adding this set of images into the other images needed for this story. And this all has to be negotiated and mediated “No, you can’t take elephants down that street past that temple.”

Money, money, money

There is no money to be made in imaginary elephants, nor in imagination full stop. The child who can take the image responses from the Treasure in their Brain and turn a cardboard box into a boat, a coach, a spaceship, a spa bath or an elephant house is not a marketer’s idea of a market unit. There is no profit in having a generation of creative children contented and satisfied with stones for dolls, sticks for swords, and cartons for stoves. The toy market is big business, Nintendo spent US\$140,000,000 on research and development in 2002 alone. The fixing of children’s buying habits for life by age six as insatiable consumers is the result of carefully calculated strategies based on research, and the health and well being of human beings has not been factored into the equation. Interestingly, television is the main medium used to programme children’s subconscious minds with the desire for more, more, and more still.

Consumption - the deadly virus

But it is not only children who are seduced by the carefully designed advertising, one look at the ‘toys’ and equipment inside and outside any early childhood centre or school is enough proof that we who buy the equipment have been infected by the consumption virus. There are very few trained education personnel who understand that much of their equipment actually ensures that imagination, creativity and quality play cannot happen, the offending equipment will kill any seeds of possibility before they even begin to sprout. While aesthetics are important, they are not the vital ingredient. It can’t be that aesthetically pleasing on the rubbish dump. Oddly enough, you will be the vital ingredient, if you can beat the virus of consumerism.

Who will hide the chocolate biscuits and save childhood?

The person who will hide the chocolate biscuits is the person who has the eyes to see which technologies and equipment will **stop** the child from developing the skill to take images into the play and begin the creative acts of making a real world, in real time, with real people, with the real images taken from their own Image Bank. With these images they will learn real social skills, and play out real energies of situations that they need to explore and integrate. With these images they can transform a low hanging branch into a horse, or a camel, or the entrance to the enchanted land ... it is endless. It is creative, it is magic, and it is what rich childhood is about.

Nourishing fare

Among educators, Rudolph Steiner was one who understood how much the growing human child needs stories to grow their intelligences and their spirit. If you were Steiner trained you would learn stories by heart and tell them to the children. Now that you know how the brain responds to the stimulus of words you can get an idea of all of the brain growth that occurs as these images are activated, joined, combined, and synthesised into new configurations. You can provide 'healthy snacks and meals' for healthy brains by telling decent stories for growing active imaginations to work with.

It is not exaggerating to say the issues which will arise for the children of this next hundred years will be so complex that they will require those same children to develop the "brain technologies and capacities" that evolution has **factored in to the mind-brain-body**. In turn, this is the very neuro-technology which will allow the future to evolve and emerge **through the imagination**. *Stimulus* and *response*, the sacred dance of creation that each of us came onto this planet expecting to dance. Help our children out: please hide the chocolate biscuits.

Notes for **Dance with me in the Heart • Level Two**: Pennie Brownlee

References:

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