

## **Brain Bites - Does a Runners High = High Grades & Life Performance? – August 2009**

### **Category – Cognitive Fitness and Literacy**

Whether you are a top athlete or someone who participates in movement based activities as a hobby, or for general fitness, you know firsthand the physical and mental benefits derived from moving your body on a regular basis.

While there are many sport options available today, running is a common activity enjoyed worldwide.

**Why do so many people love to run?** Along with the natural high that is experienced, the benefits are many! Running connects closely to the Brain Gym® model, requiring ample hydration, engaging lots of cross-lateral movement stimulation, and supports the concept of PACE, where someone moves with a sense of freedom, honoring their own timing and rhythm.

As well, minimal equipment is required, no membership fees are needed, and, it can be done in group or in one's own company. Not to mention, it's a fabulous way to get fit, be in the great outdoors, discover new parks and trails, and most importantly, running accesses one's whole brain potential through stimulating midline movement.

**Similar to the Brain Gym® activity called the “Cross Crawl” which is part of the midline movement category, running accesses the Cerebral Cortex of the 3 - Dimensional Brain, stimulating the side-to-side movement patterns of the Laterality Dimension. Keywords associated with the Cerebral Cortex are; reason, insight and communication.**

Higher level (Executive Brain) academic skills such as reading and reading comprehension are coded in the body. Dr. Dennison, the founder of Brain Gym® International, a recognized authority on reading and cognitive development, (as well as past marathon runner), made a significant breakthrough in education and learning development, when he discovered that the movement patterns of the body affect and contribute to our mental abilities and functions.

In his research it became apparent that children and adults with literacy issues also had difficulty accessing the midline space of the body, for integrative learning. To picture the midline, imagine a line drawn from the top of the head to the feet that runs between the eyes, nose and belly button.

For example, the translation of not being able to walk across a balance beam, relates to a difficulty performing mental activities and skills. When an individual is unable to access the midline they will experience blocks with oral, written and reading comprehension, listening, speech and language, relaxation of the central nervous system, concentration and attention, whole body co-ordination, binocular hearing and vision, and organization for spelling and math.

Once the individual participates in frequent, fun and integrative movement activities that engage opposite sides of the body simultaneously, the neurological connections are established and the person thrives!

**Another parallel between running and Brain Gym®, links to the fundamental similarity of the Runners Pace and the Optimal Learning Pace (OLP) of an individual. OLP of an individual holds that we all of have a unique pace – an optimal rhythm, timing and flow for learning. When we relax into that rhythm and timing, we become self-initiating learners, able to recognize our next appropriate learning step.**

The Perfect Running Pace, most regular runners can tell you when they reach that perfect equilibrium of speed and comfort. Their legs are loose, their heart is pumping and it feels like they could run at this pace forever.

For years, it has been thought that humans have a constant metabolic energy rate. It was assumed that you would require the same total energy to run one mile, no matter if you ran it in 5 minutes or 10 minutes. Even though your energy burn rate would be higher at faster speeds, you would get there in half the time. Turns out, however, that each person has an optimal running pace that uses the least amount of oxygen to cover a given distance.

**Likewise, society is becoming aware that not every one learns and functions in the same way at the same time. People, who experience enjoyment and success with running or a similar activity, will be more apt to understand the concept of pace and use it advantageously in their daily life. For those who do not always have the time to run or participate in regular physical activities there are options like Brain Gym®. With Brain Gym® you can still get the benefits of the runners high, enjoy frequent integrative movement that stimulates whole brain potential, in the classroom, boardroom and daily life, honoring our own unique pace.**

As well, Brain Gym® is great for athletes, children and adults who struggle with sports and moving with grace and ease. Using Brain Gym® can improve balance, flexibility, posture, core awareness & strength, among other things.

Jill Hewlett and Sharon Todd are both Educational Kinesiologists and Licensed Brain Gym® Trainers. Their company, Brain Works Global Inc., train clients on how to maximize their learning potential while working in conjunction with their individual goals.

They provide keynotes, in house training, and sponsored events to a wide range of organizations, schools and the community. For more information go to <http://www.brainworksglobal.com> or call 905.830.6902.