

OPTIONS CENTER EDUCATION HANDBOOK

Part 4 of 4: Brain Gym® Classes



Helen Cox has had extensive training and experience working with Brain Gym®. Brain Gym® is a program that consists of physical activities that students perform. *These activities stimulate the brain and nervous system for optimal performance in intelligence, creativity, athletics and communication.*

These activities are easy and fun. **Brain Gym® is developed from the belief that a body-brain connection is managed in large part by the brain.**

For a computer to work right it needs different commands and that necessitates communication. Unlike a computer, the brain can be stronger or weaker in certain programs.

The different parts of the brain have different functions and have specific connections in the body. By isolating different parts of the body and working with them simultaneously in exercise, specific parts of the brain are stimulated and integrated because they have been forced to work together. *The results include improved whole body coordination, balance, relaxation, improved hearing and visual perception and more positive attitudes.*



Brain Gym® Classes are held at Options generally once a week. The student and one or both parents meet with Helen.

Brain Gym® classes

Brain Gym®

Brain Gym® exercises are designed to help a student “switch on” both hemispheres of the brain. This “whole brain” state prepares you to be more receptive to learning experiences and to process these events more fully. They work on 5 major factors that inhibit learning:

1. Issues of stress and anxiety
2. Issues of ineffective learning and processing strategies
3. Issues of energy imbalance
4. Issues of dominance and laterality
5. Issues of concentration and task orientation



Reading –

Difficulty with reading creates considerable stress in both children and adults who wish to learn and achieve at higher levels.

The first three years of school are spent learning to read; the remaining years are spent reading to learn. If students have trouble reading because of problems with visual perception, they use so much energy on the skill of reading that they can't focus on learning.

Options' classes are designed to reduce unnecessary stressors in the learning process and use tracking exercises to integrate the brain for reading so the student can also spell and comprehend.

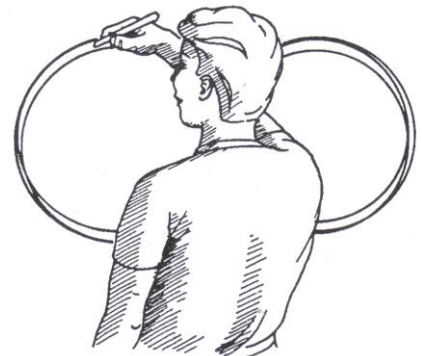
An Exercise to Support READING

- LAZY 8'S
The Lazy 8 or infinity symbol integrates the right and left visual fields, enabling the reader to cross the midline without interruption.

PROCEDURE:

Visualize a Lazy 8 in front of you, its midpoint at eye level. With eyes, start at the midpoint and visually track the figure counter clock-wise (to the left) first; up, over and around back to the midpoint. Continue clockwise (to the right): up, over, around, and back to the beginning. Your head moves slightly and your neck must be relaxed. Hum while doing the Lazy 8 to increase relaxation. Do the Lazy 8 three times with each hand, then three times with both hands together.

- Variations:
 - (1) Draw the Lazy 8 on a piece of paper or blackboard for the eyes to trace.
 - (2) Use pointed finger to trace Lazy 8 configuration, eyes following your finger.
 - (3) Adjust width and height of Lazy 8 to vary visual field.



Source: *Alternative Health Care - Space Age Interpretations of Age-Old Truths* by Helen Cox and Blaine Patino, page 143.

Following is a student who experienced improvements in reading:

Title	Age
<u>Child's Confidence Improves as Vision Problem Checked</u>	Grade School

Math & Listening–



Our students are introduced to the process of Brain Gym® which reduces the stress of learning. It provides techniques for readying students to learn mathematical skills and maximizes the effectiveness of the learning process. Experience shows a decrease in the frustration of learning and openness to the development of self-help techniques for students of all ages.

An Exercise to Support MATH SKILLS & LISTENING

- THE OWL

This exercise moves the head smoothly from left to right through the midline, keeping the chin level. The head is moved into the left and right positions for re-educating or activating auditory proprioception of the neck muscles. Squeezing your shoulder helps to release neck muscles that may be reactive to auditory skills (hearing, speech, or thinking), returning muscles to their natural length.

PROCEDURE:

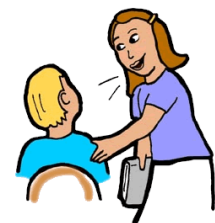
Stand with feet hip-width apart and torso forward. With fingers of the left hand find the spot on the trapezius of your right shoulder and press as hard as you can handle. Turn head as far as possible slowly in both directions back and forth while saying "whoo-oo" and maintain pressure until you feel vibrations in the bone followed by a possible "melt" in the muscle. Repeat with the other side. Once on each side is often sufficient to release pain. Lastly, the head is tilted forward with an exhalation, releasing back neck muscles in the process.



Source: *Alternative Health Care - Space Age Interpretations of Age-Old Truths* by Helen Cox and Blaine Patino, page 145.

Following is a student who experienced improvements in Math and Listening Skills:

Title	Age
<u>Young Student Takes Charge of Own Education</u>	11



Positive Attitude Development –



Positive Attitude Development classes enhance the integration of the body and brain. Results include a more relaxed and peaceful demeanor, relief of symptoms of stress, more efficient use of the body's energy and increased ability to cope comfortably with stress. The student understands the purpose of his/her behavior and misbehavior, thus becoming aware of the actual meaning of mutual respect and to gain skill in reasonable approaches for coping with daily problems of living at home and school. The good channels of communication are established at home and at school.

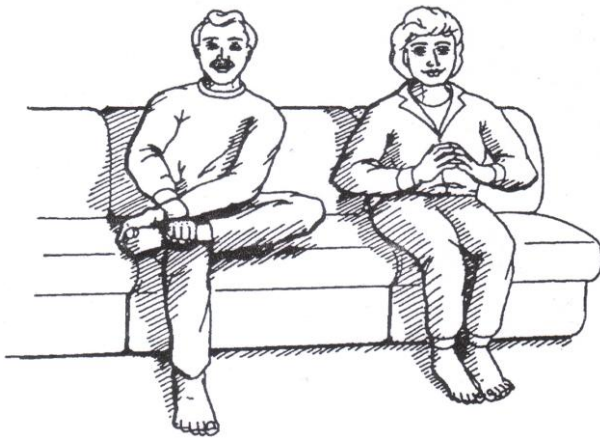
Positive Attitude Development classes are designed to reduce stress so students can:

1. Make things happen, rather than react to happening things.
2. Move from inefficiency with details to overall effectiveness.
3. Be confident with their role and responsibilities.
4. Stay in control in their environment.
5. Interact effectively with family and friends.
6. Develop their potential.
7. Reduce worries and frustrations.

An Exercise to Support POSITIVE ATTITUDES

Part 1

Part 2



Source: *Alternative Health Care - Space Age Interpretations of Age-Old Truths* by Helen Cox and Blaine Patino, page 137.

PROCEDURE:

Part 1:

- Put your left leg on top of right knee.
- Put your right hand around left ankle.
- Put your left hand around the toes of your left foot.
- Breathe deeply with your eyes closed and your tongue on the roof of your mouth.
- Focus on your breath out.
- When you feel relaxed, keep your eyes closed, look up, and put your tongue on the bottom of your mouth.

Part 2

- Focus on your breath in and see yourself how you want to be.
- When you feel finished, uncross your legs and bring your fingertips together until you feel pulsing in all fingertips at same time.

This exercise connects all the energy circuits in the body at one time and gets the electrical energy in the body moving when it is blocked. The figure 8 pattern of the arms and legs (part 1) follows the energy flow lines of the body. The fingertips touching (part 2) balances and connects the brain hemispheres.

Following are students who have experienced improvements in developing Positive Attitudes:

Title	Age
<u>Freshman's Attitude and Grades Go UP!</u>	High School Freshman
<u>Options High School Youth Motivated after Exploring</u>	High School
<u>Frustrated with Traditional Testing for her Son with Behavioral Problems, Mom goes with Other Options</u>	Fourth Grade
<u>Local Family Meets the Challenge of Coping with ADHD</u>	9 years old

Thinking Skills –



Thinking Skills focuses on the way each person learns. This process tracks the way information is absorbed, understood, and used. Suggestions for new strategies or learning activities are offered. Quite often, changing the way a person reacts to and uses new information can make a dramatic difference in attitude and learning/achievement.

The stress of learning can actually "switch off" the natural functions of the brain. Brain Gym® offers a means for assessing the effects of stress on one's ability to achieve. When brain functions are "switched on", learning is experienced as easy and natural. Then the student can reach his/her full potential.

Quite often, simple body movements can be used to improve the functions the brain.

Following is a student who experienced improvements when taking Options Thinking Skills Classes:

Title	Age
<u>Utilizing Options Helps Combat Labeling</u>	Grade school

Whole Brain/Body Integration –



This class is designed to help students integrate the brain and body so they are working in unison. Part of it involves Brain Gym® exercises, which helps integrate the parts of the brain

Some individuals, even though they may appear athletic, have difficulty coordinating the left and right sides of the body, and the upper body with the lower. For many of them movement activities demand conscious effort and control for successful execution. We all know individuals who seem to be able to dance or move gracefully, but every movement has to be thought through for them to be able to accomplish the activity.

Quality performance, however, should be conducted as a reflex or in an automatic way. We may know the experience of bowling our very best game, attaining our highest batting average, etc., where we have had one of our best performances which we acknowledge by saying, "I must

have been 'unconscious' at the time". This is exactly how it should be!

Some folks just feel out of control when it comes to physical activity – it's as if their body doesn't know what it's going to do when they attempt movement activities. Whole Brain/Body Integration is designed to change habits of conscious coordination to ones of reflex. Through balancing the hemispheres of the brain and muscle groupings in the body, a new habit of reflex control can be established.

Life is movement! One not only needs optimum mental functioning to solve life's problems but optimum body functioning as well. When we feel good, move well and look good, we believe in our capacity to cope confidently and courageously. We also do not hesitate to engage in playful or athletic activities when we believe our bodies are able to perform well. We can then shift from the role of spectator or reluctant participant to fully engaging in physical or movement pursuits.

An Exercise to Support MOVEMENT

- **CROSS CRAWL**

Cross Crawl is a reciprocal torque exercise that alternates moving one arm and opposite leg. This activates both brain hemispheres simultaneously and is potentially the best warm-up for all skills which require crossing the midline.

- **PROCEDURE:**

While sitting or standing, lift one leg and touch knee with your opposite hand. Repeat with other leg and its opposite hand in rhythmic cadence, back and forth.

- **Variations:**

(1) While standing, touch hand to opposite foot behind the body; alternate feet back

and forth.

(2) Move arms up and back across body vigorously, exploring the full range of motion in different directions while "marching" in place.



Source: *Alternative Health Care - Space Age Interpretations of Age-Old Truths* by Helen Cox and Blaine Patino, page 141.

Following are students who have experienced Options WBBI classes:

Title	Age
<u>Student Takes Responsibility, Improves Reading Skills & Finds Focus at Options</u>	Second Grade
<u>Students Gain Self-Esteem with Options' Class</u>	Sophomore
<u>Student Makes Attitude Shift Toward Success</u>	9 years

Brain Gym® can help the learner to reactivate the innate visual, auditory and motor patterns that make learning easy and natural.

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