



# melodie opens minds for learning

*Mind Moves - removing barriers to learning*, the latest offering by Linden's Dr Melodie de Jager, is a must-read for all teachers and parents who have children with learning difficulties. Linda Aucamp found out more about it.

As a pre-primary school teacher Dr Melodie de Jager was sometimes baffled by the fact that she couldn't get some children schoolready. This led her to spend years on intensive studies into applied brain research. As a consequence, she pioneered the three-dimensional brain profile and founded Mind Moves. In her latest book she examines reasons for developmental and learning problems in children and provides constructive, hands-on solutions for teachers and parents.

According to Dr de Jager, the mind and body are intrinsically linked in the process of learning. 'Where there's learning to be done, you rely on the mechanics of your entire body. The way we learn is that our senses receive information, our brain must process this information, check it against past memories, decide whether the information needs to be edited, deleted or stored, then the muscles need to respond. If there's a breakdown anywhere along this path that runs between our senses and our brain, it blocks our learning process.'

A simple example of such a breakdown is eye dominance. Most of us have two eyes, one of which is dominant. The dominant eye determines which direction we read in. According to Dr de Jager, children with left eye dominance usually find it easy to read languages that are read from right to left, such as Hebrew and Arabic. Children with right eye dominance usually find it easy to read languages that are read from left to right, like most western languages. 'The problem starts when a child is strong in the opposite eye to that needed to read his language. Common comments about these children are that they can't copy from the blackboard, they display inconsistent letter formation or they can't write between the lines. People often assume these children have a visual problem when the reading direction is the problem. Most optometrists don't test for eye dominance, but I work with Professor Jannie Ferreira who has a practice in Bergbron and he's fantastic at fixing reading direction with reading glasses,' explains Dr de Jager.

In her book she also explores the importance of the three brains (the survival brain, the emotional brain and the thinking brain), their effect on behaviour and what can be done to support learning. She also looks at the integration of the thinking brain. 'When fully integrated, the thinking brain is

the seat of intelligent thinking. But as the thinking brain is divided into two halves or hemispheres - the left and the right - one may dominate the other, resulting in an unintegrated and less effective thinking brain. When the hemispheres do not work together as a team, the brain is more like a horse-drawn cart which is being pulled by two horses running in different directions - it becomes unsettled and this creates barriers to learning.'

'School requires a child to be wired in a very specific way, a bit like a mechanical map, and if the child doesn't fit that map, he's perceived as having a learning problem and needs all kinds of therapies and remedial teaching. I find that 90 per cent of children with learning problems have superb circuitry and mechanics for activities outside of academics.'

The good news is that children with learning problems can be rewired. 'It's very important for babies to go through every developmental phase like lifting the head, rolling, crawling and walking, without the help of modern aids. These natural movements play an essential part in the wiring and formation of brain circuitry. Mind Moves mimics the natural physical movements of babies and young children in order to rewire the brain and to form extra circuitry. However, it's not a quick fix, takes a lot of dedication and exercises have to be repeated over and over until the new networks have been established. It's like learning to drive a car ... it's all about repetition!'

Mind Moves doesn't offer solutions to all learning difficulties, but it can address ADD, hyperactivity, sensory stimulation and integration barriers, learning-style barriers, language barriers and emotional barriers.



*Mind Moves - removing barriers to learning* is available from the Mind Moves Institute at R150. Details: 082-301-5860 or visit [www.mindmoves.co.za](http://www.mindmoves.co.za).

