

The National College Planning Summit

Why Tutoring Is Not Always The Answer.

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1. Dr. Gibson, when people ask you what you do, what do you tell them?

- a. We train the brain. Specifically incognitive skills.
- b. These are the skills that deal with how we process the information that comes in, how we remember it and the speed in which we do it.
- c. It is also how we deal with sounds, vision and images and how well we remember that.
- d. All these skills determine how easy or how fast or how well you learn.

2. Are these skills you can develop?

- a. Yes, your brain is constantly changing during your life. There is a rapid rise in ability through birth to age 28 which then levels off and then there is a slow decline over time. At age 65 our ability to process information is about equivalent to when we were 10 years old.
- b. Given the right circumstance and activities you can enhance that curve and enhance learning and make those skills better.
- c. Short term memory is harder to improve than long term memory.
- d. Attention and processing speed is harder to improve than comprehension and visual and auditory processing.
- e. In some areas we can make a big change and other areas only a little change.

3. What are the main cognitive skills?

- a. There are 69 skills that can be measured. They fall into 7 categories:
- b. Attention
 - i. Selective Attention - listen to one thing and ignore the distractions.
 - ii. Sustained Attention - staying on a task for a long time.
 - iii. Divided Attention - switching back & forth between 2 activities such as taking notes (you are listening and writing down at the same time.)
- c. Short-term Memory - copying a problem off the board.
- d. Processing Speed - how quickly your mind is doing these small little activities.

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- e. Logic&Reasoning - often used to measure IQ.
 - f. Visual Processing - how you process what you see.
 - g. Auditory Processing - how you process sounds.
 - h. Long Term Memory
- 4. If you ask a student to explain their learning struggles, can you pick out their weak skills?**
- a. Yes, if they have difficulty paying attention –they have attention problems.
 - b. Difficulty with spelling problems –they have auditory processing problems.
 - c. Someone who can do math well, but can't visualize it –they have a visual processing problem.
- 5. LearningRx has developed a wide range of programs to teach people to be more effective in these areas. How does it work?**
- a. We assess and then put them into specific programs to improve in different categories.
 - b. Skills are changeable, for example, you can get better at playing the piano, and you can improve how fast you run. Playing the piano is a great way to improve cognitive skills.
 - c. Skills get better as you do different things.
 - d. If someone is weak in a particular area - we can target that area to make it better – to bring it up to average or even better than average.
- 6. Can brain training and doing specific activities improve these skills and reduce the need for medication for attention problems?**
- a. In many cases yes, but not for all students. Many students with attention problems can greatly improve with training. Other students will still need medication along with training.
 - b. Most schools will make accommodations for students with attention issues, (for example, putting students at the front of the classroom, or in a smaller environment.) but this doesn't necessarily fix the problem. We train in environments of chaos to help students learn to be attentive. This is totally opposite from how the public school systems handle attention issues.
 - c. The whole concept of visual or auditory learner is to take what is strong and work on the skills where you are weak. Do not ignore the areas where you are weak. A child or college student should expand all these skill areas so opportunities are broader.

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- i. For example –A college student sitting in lecture hall with attention issues that have never been addressed is having a really hard time. A lot of skills affect how well you retain what you hear and your ability to write it down.
 - ii. If your short term memory is weak, then you may lose the information before it ever gets written in your notebook.
 - iii. How well you process sounds is critical to spelling.
 - iv. Any cognitive skill can affect how well you take notes, how well you study or how well you can recall.
- d. We identify areas through testing and symptoms, to determine what is weak and what is strong so that we can make learning easier and better.

7. Is it possible for a student to self-assess and are there any exercises they can do independently to develop these certain areas?

- a. Yes, students can start by assessing and keeping track of symptoms.
- b. For example - Students who have difficulty taking tests –they feel that they know the material but by test time, they don't remember it and they do poorly on tests.
 - i. This is a long term memory problem.
 - ii. Visualization is helpful for long term memory loss. Students should visualize and create a picture in their mind. Practice creating mental images and visualization.
 - iii. The better they can create mental images, the better they will score on the test.
- c. For example –Attention Issues – This is how Tiger Woods learned to play golf.
 - i. His father would make lots of noise & Tiger had to learn how to concentrate and not be distracted. He learned to focus and was able to ignore the distractions.
 - ii. This an example parents can do if your student is trying to memorize something. You start talking to them or making noise and enforce and build selective attention. Do this for a few minutes as a training situation. This helps them gain the skill.

8. Are there things students can do to help build these cognitive skills?

- a. Play the games Simon or Tetris.
- b. You really have to use your brain – pushing yourself to go into harder and harder activities will help you build these skills.
- c. These are skills that build and develop over a lifetime and they are based from experiences. The more you can be exposed, the better it is.
- d. Students should ask themselves, “What is tough for me? What do other people do that is a whole lot easier for them and difficult for me?”
 - i. Do those difficult things and really push yourself.

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- e. If playing chess is tough for you then playing without pushing yourself is not going to help you develop any new skills. (For example - Set a time limit for each move. You will get better.)
- f. Most people avoid the activities where they struggle. But by doing that, they are not attacking the problem. This problem can potentially handicap them later in life.
- g. It is almost like weight training - adding resistance pushes you and makes you stronger.

9. What are the characteristics of training procedures?

- a. It must be targeted to the area that needs improvement.
- b. Students need one-on-one guidance. You need to have immediate feedback otherwise you are just reinforcing the bad.
- c. Sequencing - start with small steps and gradually build steps.
- d. Loading - most things you can do at the subconscious level. They need to be automatic.
 - i. As you are learning new skills, you drive the new skill into the subconscious automatic level.
 - ii. Once the skill is automatic, you are more efficient, faster and better. Now you can use your consciousness for a problem solving activity rather than a gathering information type activity.
 - iii. These are some of the characteristics to get maximum change.

10. Does our brain want to be trained or does it fight change?

- a. Our brain doesn't make that decision - we have control over it.
- b. To succeed in life we need to improve skills. Things that are tough for a child they will avoid and things that are easy for them they will do – but children should gain skills in all areas.
- c. Students who have built up an "I do not want to fail" attitude - we have to coach them into taking risk and trying and then their brain can be trained.
- d. As a society we have an "I don't want to fail mentality." Parents should encourage their child to take risks and make it OK to make mistakes and fail because otherwise you are not going to succeed, grow, improve and change.

11. Tutoring is one-on-one assistance to help students master some sort of subject material. What is difference between tutoring and brain training?

- a. Tutoring is good for catching up - as long as the student's ability to process the information remains. For example, if a student was sick for a few days.

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- b. We assume that if a student is having difficulty in school they need tutoring. But there is a reason they aren't getting it in the first place.
- c. That is what we look at to see if cognitive training is necessary. If every year your child is falling behind in certain areas or certain subjects are difficult, it's not the instructor – it's the student's ability to process and retain the content. The student needs to improve their cognitive skills.

12. Does this mean that tutoring does not help some students?

- a. Tutoring is a tool, but it may not be the most efficient tool.
- b. Cognitive training develops better tools for the student to process information so that they can do better academically.
- c. Tutoring is throwing more content in no matter what the tools are.

13. How can High Schoolstudents who are preparing for college benefit from brain training?

- a. The easier, faster and better that you can process information, the easier any high school or college course is going to be.
- b. The sharper and faster and easier people can handle information, whether it is written, listening or visual or even tactile, the easier they will handle information.
- c. They will get better grades and they will perform better at work. They will have greater possibilities and be more effective when they get out of school.
- d. The college entrance test is really a type of IQ test. It is not looking at what you know, but looking at how well you can process information and what is your potential to learn. Colleges want graduates who can change the world.

14. What are some of the biggest problems in the education system in US?

- a. Reading - many kids aren't learning to read very well.
- b. It is Phonemic Awareness Deficiency that makes it difficult for children to learn to read. They can't blend, segment and analyze sounds well. They have difficulty to break up a word into individual sounds.
- c. This cannot be taught in a class room setting, it needs to be taught one-on-one.
- d. Auditory processing training would be great one-on-one training to help first graders in reading. We've been able to work with first graders who were deficient and in seven weeks bring them up to average. Although this training would be very expensive, it would reduce the remedial training in higher grades.
- e. One way to tackle this problem. We did a study in Pensacola FL. We trained the 5th graders to teach the 1st graders. It was very successful on several levels.
- f. Unfortunately, our school system is designed to push students ahead rather than tackle these problems.

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15. Do you have any success stories with High School students who have developed their skills with brain training?

- a. We helped a High School student with lots of potential but he had a reading issue. After working with him, he received a Merit Scholarship for doing well on the PSAT and was accepted and received the Presidential Scholarship at Stevens Institute which was \$20,000 per year.
- b. Not only does training improve cognitive ability but it improves grit and determination. Working hard is the path to success.
- c. We helped a High School Junior –she had a high IQ and was an A student, but very slow at processing the information. She knew she would not be able to finish the SAT. We worked with her for 60 hours and her IQ improved to genius level and she is going to a great college and is applying to Mensa.
- d. Students can work harder in their classes, but that may not help. For example, if you are driving from New Jersey to New York and you get a flat tire, you can still get there, but it will be a slow and bumpy ride.
 - i. This is the same thing that we find in HS students that have some sort of deficiency – they are working hard and slowly. When we can identify and work with them, they suddenly are much improved.
- e. In the working world, you have to handle things quickly, correctly and be valuable to the employer. Employers are looking for productivity and speed.

16. How does LearningRx help students?

- a. We have programs which help with:
 - i. Reading, auditory and phonemic awareness programs.
 - ii. Decoding skills.
 - iii. Comprehension which helps with memorization, vocabulary, skimming and understanding content.
 - iv. Math—we work to enhance math processing speed, logic and reasoning.
- b. You can go to our website www.learningrx.com to find a center near you.
 - i. You can take a learning skills development survey online – a self-assessment.
- c. Contact your local LearningRx Center for testing. This will identify areas of deficiencies in terms of cognitive skills and the reason or cause why learning is tough or difficult. The testing is very reasonably priced from \$99-\$250 depending on where you are in the country. Testing from other professionals can be anywhere from \$1,600 - \$2,500.
 - i. Testing can show strengths and weaknesses and what can potentially be done to make learning easier, faster and better.

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- ii. Learning skills are not always visible, but testing is a diagnostic tool like an x-ray.

17. Do you have any final thoughts for our listeners today?

- a. Every parent wants their child to be healthy, happy and enjoy life.
- b. Don't live with handicaps that affect your future if you can eliminate them.
- c. Developing cognitive skills may mean getting into college, graduating from college or getting a better job.
- d. Develop the skills now that you will be using the rest of your life.