



FROG FACTS

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Caring for the Brain

The Florida Association for Play Therapy conference in March was really something. As a nurse in a sea of non-medical play therapists, I have relished brain anatomy and physiology as it has grown over the past 60 years. Since Children's Medical Services gave me the privilege of working with profoundly handicapped children 17 years ago, the reflection of neuron connection in children's behavior has been my teaching point as well as my career choice. I will often approach this subject by saying, "If I were a cardiology nurse I would show you pictures of the heart, since I am a child psychiatric nurse, I will show you pictures and explain a child's brain." Often a point of discussion, where does the soul reside? The heart? The brain?



to realize the impact this technology has had on the culture and neurobiology of the next generation.

The biggest impact Dr. Badenoch's lesson had on me was the relational aspect of brain cell connection. Not only do my own memories, knowledge and "wiring" affect my own thoughts, feelings and behavior; but my neurons will also "resonate" with those of the people I am with and promote harm or healing. We all

work very hard at Child's Play Foundation to promote a safe, protected and healing environment for children and families who are experiencing trauma, abandonment and dysfunction. This was a good reminder. Play is not just play. Talk is not just talk. Being mindful and fully present in the struggle and the heartache of others is the key.

"A cheerful look brings joy to the heart and good news gives health to the bones." (Pr 15:30) The tongue that brings healing is a tree of life. (Pr 15:4)

On this particular weekend in March, Bonnie Badenoch PhD not only brought home a better understanding of current research on neurobiology and attachment, she helped me to realize all the brokenness and the healing we each bring to relationships.

So here we have new knowledge of implicit and explicit memories, dorsal and ventral vagal responses and the importance of mirror neurons. We learn about the right and left hemispheres and the way we stamp our perceptual bias onto our own kids. No matter how much we learn we still have abuse, neglect, heartache and strife.

As a play therapist for the past 12 years I have had many experiences listening to parents and grandparents struggling to help their child with behavior problems. Since it is usually the child's behavior that alerts the teacher or the parent to seek professional help, my nursing role is to explain the brain process and encourage caregivers to engage in treatment. Too often parents feel as though they are the reason for the child's problems. Our goal at Isaiah's Place is to show families how babies' brains develop, how they are affected by genetics and environment, and how nutrition, relationships and changes in the environment all influence brain cell (neuron) connection. By simplifying the anatomy of the brain (see Human Bean www.childsplayfoundation.org) and how babies form bonds of attachment, we help parents and grandparents understand the reasons for the behaviors they see in young children. This work has increased compliance in nutrition, reading, and interpersonal relationships between parents and their children. In a generation that has never been without a cell phone or a television or a computer, it is hard

Yet, the Creator God tells us; *the wise in heart are called discerning, and pleasant words promote instruction.*" (Pr 16:21)

The brain may rule the body but it has no life without the heart. Caring for the brain is about caring for the whole person and expecting our creator God to show up in the process.

Penny

Bonnie Badenoch PhD author of *The Brain Wise Therapist* can be found at nurturingtheheart.org

The Hearts that Went to Afghanistan

As I was reading over the definition of families at risk I was reminded of the reason we began the Afghanistan Project. Over two years ago I read a book (The Bookseller of Kabul by Asne Seierstad) that helped me to understand where “the least” are living, Afghanistan: where poverty, illiteracy, prejudice, injustice and ignorance reign. I wanted to go there. Certainly, I thought, if I could get to those women, those moms and tell them how special they are, tell them that as humans they are so wonderfully made . . .



Last year, when my son, Ben, an army lieutenant, was deployed to this country to implement a “counterinsurgency plan” he invited me to come with my sand tray and toys and help those populations who have been held hostage by the injustice of the Taliban. Of course, I thought, I can get a job there, and be close to him. I will even wear a Burqa if I have to! Obviously the Lord had other plans and the State Department and the patients at Isaiah’s Place are happy that I stayed here. But I

needed to help – somehow. Ben suggested we send items no longer used by most American homes; needles, thread, fabric, candles, old pens, pencils, pads of paper, rice and cooking oil – all items treasured by women in the villages of Paktya, Afghanistan. This gave birth to the Afghanistan Project (see www.childsplayfoundation.org) ‘Winning Hearts and Minds by Cleaning Drawers and Closets’ with all the blessings of the Joint Chiefs and the United States Post Office. Little did I realize how easy it would be to collect these items from client families, my church and in our small village. As our front porch filled with items and overflowed to our living room we scheduled willing friends to help us pack and label. The Board of the Child’s Play Foundation agreed to allow a line item under postage in the budget so others could donate a tax-deductible contribution to the mission. The Power Point went far and wide to encourage others to collect and send items. We began this project in November of 2010 and by May 2011 we had overwhelmed the budget and had to stop collecting items. Over 120 boxes of humanitarian assistance have been sent to Gardez, Paktya, Afghanistan. The Amvet Post 447 in Inglis Florida is sending the last 6 boxes.



Happily, Mrs. Gerdes and Mrs. Stauffer’s 4th graders at Lecanto Primary are considering this project next year. It was fun to teach the students the plight of women, children and their families who have lived in generations of violence. These children made paper airplanes with joyful messages and donated many of their own school supplies. Their teacher had been reading the Breadwinner series by Deborah Ellis. I was so intrigued I read them and gave them to children and adults to read. What a picture of Taliban rule through the eyes of children! We are still receiving monetary donations to resolve the postage expenses. We have \$418.90 left to raise.



See more evidence of donations being received at www.Facebook:PRTPaktya



This side of the Story. . . .

After attending the Even Start Graduation and listening to the heart of a young woman who's life was changed I received sad news about the local education cutbacks (cut out is a better operative word) .It is unlikely that the mental health part of the Family Literacy Program we have worked with the past 6 years will survive. Federally funds have been diminishing nationwide but Citrus County has shined bright for many reasons . Pat Stokes and her faculty have worked diligently to support our work there. I am more amazed than ever how literacy has made the difference in so many families, cultures and countries. I know our politics and economics are worrisome at times, but I also know we are very blessed. A thank you from one of the team . . .

Dear Friends and Family,

Feb. 28, 2011

My work is starting to have some real benefits, the local GIRoA (Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan) leadership is starting to show some marked improvement after four solid months of mentoring, but there are many shortfalls that make it frustrating for everyone. Working with foreign fledgling governments really gives you an appreciation for the United States. Our system of checks and balances truly magnificent. When we consider that the voice of the people move the reality of governance it fills one with a sense of pride. Even as we accept that fact of lobbyists' and special interest groups' actions, it is the *fact* of our voice that is inspiring. Americans, even as disenchanting as so many are, participate in their government and will not be satisfied to let policy that robs the poor and encourages corruption to stand. I recognize that ours is not a perfect government, corruption and exploitation occur regularly, but the *conversation* is available. We are as involved as we choose to be, and it is our right.

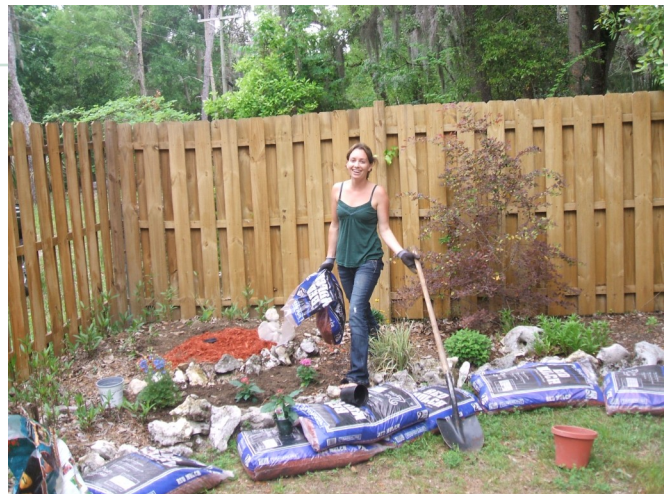
I am proud as an American and a soldier to put my shoulder to the effort of so noble a cause, even at the sacrifice of days and months apart from my loved ones. It was the fight against the disease of tyranny that brought us to these mountains, and as such cannot be left to fester. The task is not easy but our resolve must be equal to it, else all we have done is in vain.

I thank you for all that you have done to aid your loved ones overseas, me especially, we feel your support and are emboldened by it. - Benjamin.

Volunteering. . . . Training. . . . Playing. . . .



This young mom and dad teach their children about politics, geography, hard work and team building all in an afternoon at a packing party for Afghanistan.



Friend Chrissy pulled up to our garden in her truck with a trailer on fine April day. She brought flowers and dirt and mulch and our brand new red bud tree ! We have enjoyed the color, the birds, the butterflies and the friendship!



At Isaiah's Place
6210 Harmony Lane
Yankeetown, FL 34498

Why a Frog you say? Besides the fact that Isaiah's Place is in a wonderful natural environment and we have a lot of the "frog theme" here, the children are reminded that **F.R.O.G.** is also an acronym for **Fully Relying On God**. That is what our founding principles at Isaiah's Place continue to be .



Members of the Board

Child's Play Foundation, Inc

- * Donna Taudte
- * June Proffit
- * Judy Koole
- * Marty Keith
- * Darlene Walker



PUBLIX SUPER MARKETS
CHARITIES

Meet the Board of Directors

Once a quarter these good women get together to decide about the business of Child's Play Foundation. Their faithfulness to the work is what makes this organization continue . I am a nurse, not a business woman, a play therapist not an accountant or a grant writer. Without the combined wisdom and experience of Donna , Marty, June, Darlene and Judy, (pictured from left to right), running a non profit would be impossible. These directors know how to encourage as well as discern. They are the people I go to when I am considering contracts or negotiating newsletter printing prices. This is a happy time at lunch after the May meeting. Besides budgets and by-laws, fundraising and the future we talk about critters and casseroles, flowers and fun. Oh and sometimes we laugh and laugh and laugh! What a blessing they are!

