Ep 170: The Fundamental Skills Every Child Needs For Healthy Brain Development Transcript

(Transcripts are generated by AI and may contain errors)

Introduction to developmental fundamentals

Hi everybody, it's Dr. Laura with Connect My Brain. Thank you for tuning in. As always, I so enjoy bringing information to you and today will be no different.

So today what we are going to talk about are some fundamentals. What are the fundamentals that our children really need? Why are they not getting them?

And what could you do to help your child get the right start for a great connection? Here at Connect My Brain, we are always talking about the developmental journey that children go through and even more so how it can impact us for our entire life.

Yes, I have met many adults who, when I begin to ask the question, how long have you been going through this? I can remember it as far back as being in elementary school, or it really hit me when I started high school.

And a lot of these things, they are there, but unfortunately, I don't believe we're really catching them like we are supposed to. So today what I want to talk about is I wanna talk I want to talk about reading and I wanna talk how do you put those circuits together, why you can't just stick a label on it like dyslexia and that's all it's gonna take.

And then I also wanna to about telling time. what learning how to tell time really does for an individual. So let's start off with time, because we start to get our little ones in the direction of, okay, go get your stuff.

Why time perception matters

We have to leave in five minutes. And if a child doesn't really know how to tell time, they really do not know the perception of what five minutes really feels like.

So to kind of put this to the test, ask your child, put your timer on your phone and ask you child tell me when five minute is up. Decades ago, learning how to tell time as most academic credentials, foundations, principles, they're all developed through tactile manipulation, meaning I got to put my hands on it because when I put something happens and in fact what I'm gonna do is I am going to pull up what is called a homunculus and I've done this before and we'll make sure that we put it in the show notes for you to look at again but it has to do with What areas of the body are represented on what is called the homunculus now for people that are listening to the podcast.

I want you to go back and I wants you look at the show notes and maybe even if you could, go ahead and look an image of it because it's really important when you're trying to understand how we talk about brain things, where are we getting this information?

So if your able to watch this, what I'm pulling up is a picture, and at the bottom is like a full brain from the top down. And there is red arrow going one way and a blue arrow, going another way.

The red and the blue, they represent the action and sensory. So the red is the Action, the Blue is Sensory. But what is on this homunculus, which does go all the way across, are pictures of our body parts.

And so when I talk about anything to do with our hands getting involved, this part of the brain the homonculus is laying on is actually the sensory motor cortex.

So any of these kids that are coming along and people say they have sensorimotor processing. This is exactly the part of the brain that is being impacted.

And this is the parts of brain, that was actually starting to get laid down while your little baby was inside of your womb. So this fundamental part of how our brains get wired.

And I've said this in numerous podcasts that first, we learn through our body. When babies are born, they're not reading, writing, and doing arithmetic.

they are maneuvering around on the floor, they're grabbing everything, everything is going into their mouths, and all of these things have a reason. But what I want to highlight is the size of the hand.

So when you have the chance to look at this, The size of the body part as it is outlined on the homunculus, the sensory motor cortex, plays a huge part in that little baby taking something fundamental and learning how to do it, putting a foundation down so that then the higher brain can actually take that information and build new circuits.

If you can't do that because you missed a movement piece, these brains are pretty spectacular. They will try to adapt. But as I've said before as well, adaptation typically comes at a cost.

And that cost is showing up in, let's just say, I don't know how to tell time. I'm having a lot of trouble with writing. I am having trouble spelling.

And those are the things that I want to break down today. The other part that you should really look at is the size of the face. That takes up a very large part.

This is our mirror neuron, meaning children are going to watch and do. And then I think it's also quite interesting how the tongue is a very big part and why babies do put things in their mouth.

Fine motor skills, shoes, and handwriting

Of course, keep your environment safe and clean, but we can be almost too sterile and not let children experience the environment around them and therefore they don't really build an immune system.

You might be really surprised that in the world of allergies, what is actually going on is they are giving allergy-filled blankets in order for these children to roll around on and experience things in their environment to desensitize those allergies.

And one of the things that I do feel very strong about, and we're going into fall, depending upon when you actually listen to this, but people always say, oh, it's my allergies, well, there's that word adaptation.

How are you adapting to your environment? Now, why do some people have allergies and some don't? We'll dive into allergies another time, but just keep that in your mind.

A lot has to do with adaptation. So years ago, we used to take paper plates. We used to make two arms on them with arrows, and you'd use the little pushpin things that you push through and fold them back to hold those arrows in the middle of the plate.

And we would put the numbers of clock, 12, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11. Then you would manipulate those errors with your hands. and the teacher would say, okay, I'd like everybody to put one o'clock on their paper plate.

Or you might have a worksheet that then has several pictures of exactly what it is that you're working with and you had to say what time it was. Well, there was a shift.

There was the shift probably about 20 years ago to a digital clock. So now, We don't really read the face of a clock unless you have old fashioned ones in your home.

And if you school-aged children, I would highly recommend that that's what you use in you home and if your going to buy somebody a watch, i wouldn't get them an apple watch just because it's all computerized and we're not

really learning as well as having wifi on you all the time, another day, and another topic.

But we went to the digital clock. And now all you have to do is read the numbers. So you don't really get a sense of what time is and so if you have that kind of struggle with your little one and it could even be your teenager that you tell them five minutes and you keep hearing the word okay I'll be right there and they never come down or they don't show up for dinner or whatever the case may be Or you've got to finish this, you know, we've thought now math madness where how many problems can you finish in a minute?

And we have things that are time oriented. But if a child doesn't really have a sense of time, you're actually creating more stress, especially in the math madness world.

But I would encourage you practice this. One of the things that I try to really help people understand, we have the ability to change many things. But you have to practice.

There is no magic wand. there isn't somebody that can just go poof, you've got it. You have kind of go backwards and give your brain equal repetitions of practicing something so that it can then be automatic.

Okay, so that's in the arena of time. One of the things, if a parent comes here and tells us that their child has a lot of problems with time, I'm going to make all those same kind of suggestions, but we actually practice.

Once we do our little time thing, tell me when five minutes is up, then what we're going to do is have them bring a book bag with clothes just so that they can learn how long it's actually taking them to put their clothes on.

Again, if you don't make somebody aware of something, it is going constantly feel like you're pushing uphill. And it's not that you haven't taught it, you have.

Unfortunately, there's just lots of things going on in the world and many things can get overlooked and people themselves can be very caught up. I don't think parents have good margins today and I think they're doing the best that they can.

But if we don' put the brakes on some of this stuff, It is going to impact. How is time going impact my child if they don't know how to tell time? Well, I think that's like a fundamental skill.

How do you allow yourself to make sure if you're on the college campus that you are at the bus stop at appropriate time? Or how much time is it going to take you to walk to campus?

So it's those particular pieces of time. But what about going up to the executive function like planning? Executive function is that higher brain level.

Am I able to realize that it takes time to make a plan. So if I have a paper to write, if i have day trip that I need to take, all of those elements take time.

And so the idea is that from little childhood, you're teaching through one of the means tactile visual feeling in order to build upon to then be able to go into that higher brain function in ordered to do things like planning your outline for your essay.

How much time is it going to take you to prepare for you college entrance test or the history test that you've got next week? I mean, all of these elements, how many days in advance, and how much physical time.

All of the elements or foundational pieces of understanding time are actually taught very early.

Reading, spelling, and visual processing

Okay, let's look at tying your shoes. This is the eight, well, it's been the age of Velcro, and it is easy. I understand when your child, remember the size of those hands on the homunculus, if that child is not grasping, pencil grip, and

being able to do fine motor control, they won't learn easily bunny ears, cross them over, tuck them under the burrow, and pull them.

Now, this is also a fundamental fine motor skill. If you bypass it with Velcro, then you've taken away a fundamental piece of what it is going to take to develop fine-motor control for riding.

When you come into this world, you use the lateral side of your hand. And the later side for the podcast audience is the pinky, the ring finger, and the middle finger.

You use those three fingers like a rake. then you move into the pincer grip. You start to use the index and the thumb, and they will start doing this as early as nine, 10 months.

But if we bypass that when it goes to the next level, meaning where I might play with a toy easily, but now I've got to us my pinzer grip to tie my shoes, If I miss out on that and now all I have to do is take my gross motor, pull up the Velcro, hear the ripping noise, and then lay it back down, there is no fine motor control in that.

And the next thing that you may be faced with is your child's handwriting is terrible. Now, those are physical milestones that the child would innately go through in order to polish their skills.

All of these things can also have the primitive reflexes that are still firing in the brain stem and inhibiting the child to go forward. And that's why doing a developmental assessment is so powerful.

You figure out which one it is. So what primitive reflects would inhibit a child's writing? Well, that's the palmar reflex. And those that reflex babies are born with.

So what is the Palmar Reflex? So the Palmer reflex, babies, are borne with, and this is when you put your finger into your baby's hand, and your Baby will close down on your finger with its whole hand.

Okay, that is the palmar reflex. So for the podcast audience, I'm pretending that I am holding out the baby hand and I putting my finger into the hand And the Baby is closing its hand on my Finger.

so it makes a fist around your finger, that is the palmar reflex. That goes to that at first I'm going to use my whole hand and move into that lateral part of the hand to do all of my grasping.

But then we break parts up. So we stop moving with the whole thing. And again, keep the homunculus in mind, the power of how big that hand is on that homonculus, a sensory motor cortex.

I break up the whole hand responding and I'm able to go into my pincer grip, which is the index and the thumb, and that's exactly how you hold your writing instrument.

Now, the other things that are interrupting is we're moving away from using pencils and pens and crayons. We're doing so much on the computer, and pushing the keypad is not fine motor control.

So again, it's the same thing. All right, I'm going to put in a substitute for tying shoes with Velcro. I am going put a substitutes for actually learning how a clock moves and I just going flash the numbers.

And the same thing is true about writing. We're not encouraging that fine motor control. And to me, I completely understand why we have so many kids that have a very difficult time with writing.

That's one of the things that I look at when I do a developmental assessment. I literally do hand writing sample. Look at how they hold it. I have them do various tasks so that I can see exactly where they are.

And what we're able to identify is a neurological age compared to a chronological age. And all of those things that I was talking about with time and tying shoes and writing, that is going to put that child into an aspect of developmental delay.

Things that are going impact how the teacher is gonna look at them at school. And this is one of the reasons why I like to spend a lot of time on these topics when your kids are going back to school.

So when you're staying current with the podcast, that's the way that I create. What kind of content am I going to talk about? So right now it's September 14th when I'm actually recording this particular podcast 2025. and the kids are back at school and teachers are evaluating.

And I've already seen one child where mom also in conjunction of coming here just wanted, because of her background, wanted to make sure through a psych eval if we were all on task.

I think it really gave her some comfort too and that's perfectly fine. But everything that we had already picked up on was exactly written in that report.

And so we're going to address those things. The things that I try to avoid for kids is I tried to avoiding labels. Because I've seen over the years, 30 years of doing this, when a child gets a label, sometimes that label follows them through their whole academic career.

And if you get a particular label that is going to be governed by the diagnostic statistical manual, like attention deficit, attention hyperactivity, dyslexia, you know, any of these typical labels that kids have a tendency to get That can only be changed by somebody of equal caliber who gave the diagnosis.

And when you go and you actually look up these diagnoses, they are all under the canopy of some type of mental health issue. And according to the CDC, you can never get rid of those.

And I can tell you that is not true. I have known many children that have been given such a label and they were able to get it reversed. and I've also known.

Many more parents that didn't want to go that way and decided to look at a developmental process like we do here at Connect My Brain. and realize that there's so much more to the story.

So there are some fundamental pieces just about time and fine motor control. Let's talk about spelling and let's about reading. So you actually do not have a place in your brain that is identified as the reading place.

It's actually called the letter box. And it's your ability to learn and to recognize. To recognize visually what the letters looks like. recognize auditorially what the letter sounds like.

Connect My Brain services and membership

So in lots of the podcasts, but just to kind of hit some high points, we can go all the way back to the beginning and even begin to identify how just typical developmental milestones, if they are not reached, are going to make it very difficult for your child to recognize visually, auditorially, but even more important to have the ability to start to learn that young and then be able to build it into a circuit.

So always remember, when you're born, you fully form, but you are dominated in your brain stem. You're not coming into this world recognizing letters.

In fact, the first thing that you have to do is you to acquire cooing and wooing, and ooing. Those are the vowel sounds. And then we start to go into the harder sounds, like ma and da and ca.

We're putting together those two sounds that's in the 1st year of life. So even in our intake forms, we wanna know, did your child do that? Because it starts to build the platform.

You obviously read to your children, and your childhood in those early years was picking up how to follow the word. you probably had your finger on the page.

I really don't understand, before I say that, Remember what I said about the hands and the homunculus? I don't know what's happened in school that we're telling kids you shouldn't use your finger to follow the word.

You shouldn' use you fingers to count. Do you remember the size of the hand on the Homunculus? Why couldn't you use three plus five? Oh, that's eight.

There I am visually, tactily. We've removed some very fundamental pieces of early childhood that is making it very difficult for kids. So, okay, let's get back to the reading and the spelling.

So I also talked about, let's go to the eyes for just a second. You have central vision, did a podcast, couple of them in there, go through the library.

Maybe I'll get Marcy to highlight a couple in the show notes for you on the vision part. But you have Central Vision. Central vision you go into the eye doctor, read the smallest line of print that you can see.

That's central Vision, that's 6%. peripheral vision goes from central all the way behind your ears. So if I'm looking right at the camera while I do the podcast, I can still see everything over here.

But when you're a child, That is also helping you integrate other reflexes that are gonna make you feel safe. If this kid's peripheral vision is always scanning and perceiving threat, how in the world can you focus and concentrate?

So many of the kids, and I'm gonna say a high number, 95%, at least, that come in with that either speculation of some type of attention issue or they have been labeled.

They all have oculomotor deficiency. Oculo motor just simply means oculo is eyes, motor is how the eyes are moving. You have six muscles wrapped around your eyeball.

Now I am not an optometrist and that's not what I'm doing. I've not looking at visual acuity. I'm looking at function. I look at functions as it relates to every single part of the developmental journey.

And if you've got five categories of how you get wired up, fine motor, gross motor social, communication, and adaptation. The kids that are coming in with anxiety, with the kids coming with oppositional behaviors, kids with no endurance, high fatigue, and little interest, motivation.

They are crushed by trying to adapt to something that somebody has not figured out. And here at Connect My Brain, we do figure it out, and we have a very structured program.

I have 80 minutes every time your child comes in here. My goal is undivided attention for every single one of those children. We will always make time for our parents, but when your little one comes in here, we are 100% focused on them.

We are connecting with them, We're encouraging them We display ourselves as coaches and this is their gym. This is where they get to practice. It has literally broken my heart, especially over the last five years, of how many kids come in here and the very first thing that they say is, oh, did I get it wrong?

We've already laid down defeat. And that is part of the equation too. If I feel like I'm going to be wrong all the time, why should I try? Well, we want you to try Connect My Brain because we are a different approach, a difference program.

Now, if you're in the local area, Fill out a contact me page on the website, connectmybrain.com. Everything about us is called Connect My Brain. And tell me, let's get on a phone, have a dialogue.

Let's say you're not in the Atlanta area. We do remote work as well. And then, which I love, is after we get some of the remote pieces coming and we are moving forward and parents can see that we have the ability to make change even from a distance, they come for an intensive.

These intensives, they're intense. We typically will see you between three and five days and that child will come in two times a day and we're going to finish up any of our data collection because now the child's actually here and then we are going polish up that plan and send it home and continue our coaching.

We've had people that have come last year who also now came this year just to kind of regroup. Because some of these issues, your child will have to go through some those developmental journeys a couple of times.

But if we're not getting progress, then we are not the right one for you. We do get progress. It is my goal as the owner and founder of Connect My Brain.

I rest on the ability to get results. That's what it's all about. that's What you want as a parent, but you got to reach out, you gotta let us know what you're going through.

You know, I had the opportunity yesterday to go to a wedding, and it was primarily for young people and I was just invited as A plus one, which was fabulous.

And I so enjoyed my experience. One, these were all young people in their either like early to late 20s. They were having so much fun. And yeah, they did.

they pulled me in on the dance floor and I had a really good time too. I love to dance. But we were talking about these fundamental pieces and I received information from one of them that I just, I want to pass on because it came from somebody in their mid-20s.

How much they love to read, but they loved reading a book. One, I'm the same way. If you saw how many books I have in this office, you'd know that about me right away, okay?

But this was the pearl that was so different. With a book, You get to see your progress. as you read the book. So let's say that book is two inches and now you've only got an inch to go.

That's reward. that's what your brain is looking for. It's looking forward reward what you did. You get to see the progress. Everything behind neurofeedback.

We are teaching people how to recognize reward so that they can apply it to every part of their life. Now, maybe you're thinking, okay, this is the first podcast I've ever heard.

Sounds intriguing. Well, we have a couple of ways that you can dip your toe in. So one is listen to more podcasts. We also have free app. Again, everything about us is called Connect My Brain.

Now, if you look at the app, you might seem to think that it's just about babies, but it is not. It's the same message that I'm trying to give you right now.

You might be able to look it that app and go, You know what? My son missed this. My daughter missed. This my son did this too long. And you may begin to realize that how the child's brain gets wired, how your brain got wired.

How my brain get wired was the experience that we had as we navigated through our developmental journey. And if you miss a piece, if don't do one long enough, If you do on too short, it impacts how those circuits are going to come online.

And that's the way neurology works. Now, you might say, hey, I'm ready to do a little bit more. So we've got a great membership. It's called the CMB membership, if you put in September 2025, then you will get $5 off.

Now, if by chance you see a different code down in the show notes, go with the code that's in show note, because again, I'm doing this on the 14th of September.

But we want you to get $5 off. It brings it down to $14.99. Well, what am I getting for that? Well you get access to a

private podcast. This is where I do a deeper dive and I talk about things and show you holistic ways of approaching it.

You also get access to our private Facebook page, our group called Moms Corner. Now dads, you're always included, but moms like a village. And that's what was in the heart of Connect My Brain, or creating Mums Corner, But maybe we'll add a tagline for dads too, because we want you to be involved.

I love when the dads are involved, especially with the boys. The boys are now, especially after they get to be about eight years old, they're looking to you.

They're not looking mom. So we want you to part of Connect My Brain. Check it out. If you go over to the website, you can see all kinds of things. We have some videos on there.

Uh, we're talking about the go back to school page. There's, there's lots of information and that's what we are all about is educating our community and our is the world.

Thanks for tuning in today