



## **OT Teams with Other Modalities to Boost Whole Brain Learning**

**By Mari Miyoshi, Occupational Therapist**

Is getting homework finished a seemingly never ending task? Does your child struggle with getting the ideas in his head down on paper? Does your bright child love stories, but performs surprisingly weakly when it comes to reading or writing?

When children who are otherwise normal do poorly in school, especially when they seem to get stuck on things you know they can do, this could be the sign of a motor difficulty or developmental delay. When ability and performance are a mismatch, the occupational therapist may have a lot to offer.

Occupational therapy is a type of treatment that helps clients, disabled through illness, injury, or developmental disability get back to doing whatever they identify as their role in life, and with as much independence as possible. For a mother recovering from a spine injury in an auto accident, it might mean working towards being able to keep house and care for the children. For an elderly person recovering from a stroke, it might mean relearning how to brush one's teeth and perform other activities of daily life. For a child it is to go to school and play.

Today, occupational therapy has grown well beyond its rehab roots to include many different healing approaches not traditionally used. Occupational therapists specializing in children work in many different settings, including school systems, therapeutic riding stables, and sensory integration clinics.

Occupational therapy strives to help children learn, play, and perform at their highest potential. Occupational therapy generally coaches children one-on-one, practicing exercises targeted to their specific difficulties. Together coach and child work on stimulating and working with the brain centers for movement as well as cognition and emotion.

One set of techniques, Brain Gym®, uses simple body movements to access and stimulate brain functions. This approach, developed by educational kinesiologist Paul Dennison, makes use of movement approaches as diverse as traditional calisthenics, eye exercises, and pressure points derived from acupuncture.

CranialSacral therapy can also be a useful adjunct to occupational therapy, because it works to remediate organic distortions in the tissues that may be causing pain, restriction of movement, or other physical and emotional difficulties. Occupational therapy, with its goal of helping clients achieve optimal life functioning, complements the pain relief and healing goals of CranialSacral therapy. The two approaches can be used conjunction with one another to help children progress toward whole brain learning.

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