



BRAIN matters

an e-newsletter from **THE UPSIDE NMOD**
organization

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September 2008

The Benefits of a Bilingual Brain

By Frank J. Kros, President of The Upside Down Organization

During the course of summer, I was fortunate to have some unique travel experiences as I shared with others the Transformation Education philosophy and the strengths of brain-based learning.

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Two of the more memorable experiences were my visits to the Alamo Navajo Indian Reservation in New Mexico and the community of Spengen in north central Germany. In both these locations I encountered really wonderful people, spectacular scenic beauty and a commitment to bilingual education beginning in early childhood. As a typical monolingual American, I was impressed with the dedication to multiple languages in these two communities and their schools. As a devout "brain person," the impact of bilingualism on the brain, particularly developed beginning early in the educational process

Specifically, I was interested in whether learning school/kindergarten was a benefit or burden to the Alamo Navajo reservation, most children experience origin in the home. When these children enter preschool, they learn English and perform academically in English. In Germany, the German language is spoken at home and used in kindergarten, students are expected to learn a third language before completion of the equivalent sure, one of the most notable observations of my traveling proficiency the German children and youth had is that they speak English commonly, fluidly and with obvious comfort. So, what is the impact of early bilingualism on the brain?



I became curious about the impact when multiple languages were introduced.

Two languages starting in pre-developing brain. At the Alamo Navajo reservation, most children experience origin in the home. When these children enter preschool, they learn English and perform academically in English. In Germany, the German language is spoken at home and used in kindergarten, students are expected to learn a third language before completion of the equivalent sure, one of the most notable observations of my traveling proficiency the German children and youth had is that they speak English commonly, fluidly and with obvious comfort. So, what is the impact of early bilingualism on the brain?

Historically, parents and educators have been concerned that exposing children to a second language too early in development might actually simultaneously dampen intellectual growth. New research on bilingual children reach language milestones on par with monolingual children and show no signs of "language confusion." In fact, being fluent in two languages in early childhood appears to have immediate cognitive benefits in terms of improved concentration while also protecting against the onset of dementia and other

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In a recent article published by the [Society for Neuroscience](#), a review of this emerging research notes that bilingual preschoolers have been found to be better able than their monolingual peers at focusing on a task while tuning out distractions. A similar enhanced ability to concentrate, considered to be a reflection of a robust working memory, has been found in bilingual adults, especially in those who became fluent in multiple languages at an early age.

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Perhaps most encouraging are recent findings that suggest early bilingualism may stave off cognitive decline in later years. According to the Society for Neuroscience, "[B]ilingual adults have denser gray matter (brain tissue packed with information-processing nerve cells and fibers), especially in the brain's left hemisphere, where most language and communication skills are controlled. The effect is stronger in people who learned a second language before the age of five... and suggests that being bilingual from an early age significantly alters the brain's structure." (Society for Neuroscience, Brain Briefings, "The Bilingual Brain," September 2008.) Moreover, improved function is also found in the right hemisphere of early bilinguals, so much so that the heightened neural activity shows upon brain images so predictably that it serves as a "neurological signature" for bilingualism. Researchers speculate that these improved functions may delay the onset of age-related dementia, including Alzheimer's disease, by up to four

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UPSIDE DOWN WORKSHOP

Children and youth with attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (AD/HD) have unique brains. Like all brains, AD/HD minds have strengths and weaknesses.

Rethinking Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder :What Works, What Doesn't and Why

Presented by

Frank J. Kros

Oct. 10, 2008

Hilton Garden Inn-BWI
1516 Aero Drive, Linthicum, Md. | [Directions](#)
9a.m.-4p.m.

Early-bird rate :\$139 before 9/30/ **Regular rate** :\$159 starting 9/30
Group rate :\$119 (three or more registrations)

In [Rethinking Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder :What Works, What Doesn't and Why](#), you'll learn the "12 Power Tools" for maximizing the strengths and minimizing the contextual weaknesses of the AD/HD brain. This seminar explores how and why the AD/HD mind works differently from non-AD/HD minds and is packed with scores of practical interventions for improving learning and behavior.

Participants learn how to become "the surrogate frontal lobes" for AD/HD brains and how to change their thinking about AD/HD from a behavioral disorder to a unique brain construct that can be accommodated with highly successful outcomes. This workshop is a "must-have" for parents who are personally affected by AD/HD and child-serving professionals in the fields of education and social work.

This workshop has been approved for 6.0 contact hours of Category I CEUs by the Board of Social Work.

ORGANIZATIONAL SPOTLIGHT

University of Maryland School of Social Work Office of Continuing Professional Education



UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND
SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK

[The Office of Continuing Professional Education at the University of Maryland School of Social Work](#) is dedicated to providing lifelong learning of the highest quality to social workers and human service professionals.

For the past three years, The Upside Down Organization has been working with this organization to deliver some of our most popular workshops including "Jack's Brain, Jill's Brain;" "Different Brains, Different Behaviors;" "Secrets of the Teenage Brain;" and "Rethinking Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder: What Works, What Doesn't and Why."

The goal of the program is to expand and strengthen professional knowledge and skills at the post-bachelor's and master's level for improved service to clients, organizations and communities. Their programs provide participants with the opportunity to join a community of colleagues, to learn new evidence about practice, to exchange ideas and to deepen connections to others working on common endeavors.

More than 150 full- and half-day sessions are presented every year by local and regional experts in the fall, spring and summer. All programs are open to any person who registers and pays workshop tuition, except in those cases where specific limitations are stated in the workshop description.

UPSIDE DOWN WORKSHOP

Only one week left to register!

Social workers are confronted daily with difficult ethical decisions. Increase your ability to critically assess ethical dilemmas in the workplace, and enhance your skills in ethical decision making with this engaging, hands-on course. [Learn more.](#)

Ethical Responsibilities in Social Work

Featuring Presenter [Shawn Reagle, LCSW-C](#)

Monday, Sept. 29, 2008

8:30 a.m. to noon

The Children's Guild, Discovery Park
6802 McClean Blvd. | Baltimore

ASK FRANK

Frank J. Kros, UDO president, answers your questions about kids and the brain

Dear Frank // I saw your "Teenage Brain" presentation in Austin last month at the Texas Network of Youth Services Annual Conference. I'm a social service professional and very interested in learning more about the brain and how neuroscience can help my clients. I did not have any neuroscience courses in undergraduate or graduate school. Can you recommend how I can get started with developing a working knowledge of the brain? // **Kim in Texas**



Dear Kim // For social service professionals, there are numerous resources I'd recommend to get started.

The first is John Medina's new book [Brain Rules: 12 Principles for Surviving and Thriving at Work, Home and School](#) (2008, Pear Press, Seattle, Washington). Medina is a molecular biologist with a gift for making neuroscience fun and practical. His 12 brain principles provide not only a solid foundation in brain anatomy and function, but will give you multiple positive intervention tools to use with your clients. As a bonus, Medina includes a DVD with the book that gives you a video tour of the brain that is both enlightening and entertaining.

Next, subscribe to [Social Work Today](#) news magazine. This progressive publication has been adding more articles addressing the integration of neuroscience and social work. Go to www.socialworktoday.com to sign up.

Finally, get copies of the following two studies: *Hardwired to Connect: The Scientific Case for Authoritative Communities* is an important study coordinated by Dartmouth Medical School that explores the need for connections in the brains of four children and how our communities can restructure to provide those connections. Order a copy at www.americanvalues.org. The Alliance for Children and Families also has published a provocative message for social workers in *The New Frontier: Neuroscience Advancements and their Impact on Nonprofit Behavioral Health Care Providers*. In the New Frontier, the Alliance authors argue that social work is far behind the neuroscience curve and urges radical new relationships as a means of catching up as a profession. Download a free copy at www.Alliance1.org. These print resources will give you a powerful and inspiring beginning to your neuroscience journey. Next month, I'll share my favorite online resources.

If you have a question for Frank, e-mail info@upsidedownorganization.org, subject: "Ask Frank."

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Guidetoupcomingeventsand UpsideDownworkshops



Sept.25

AnneArundelCountyPublicSchools
"BrainMatters"presentedbyFrankJ.
Kros,MSW,JD
Annapolis

Sept.29

[OPENWORKSHOP:"EthicalResponsibilitiesinSocial Work"](#)

PresentedbyShawnReagle,LCSW-C
TheChildren'sGuild-Baltimore,DiscoveryPark
Baltimore

Oct.1-2

MASSD2008AnnualConference
OceanCity,Md.

Oct.8

[MarylandSuicidePreventionConference](#)

"SuicideandtheDevelopingBrain"presentedbyFrankJ.Kros
Baltimore

Oct.10

[OPENWORKSHOP:"RethinkingAttention-Deficit/HyperactivityDisorder:What Works,WhatDoesn'tandWhy"](#)

PresentedbyFrankJ.Kros,MSW,JD
Linthicum,Md.

Oct.28

[NationalMiddleSchoolAssociation's35thAnnualConferenceandExhibit](#)

"PovertyandtheBrain"presentedbyFrankJ.Kros,MSW,JD
Denver

Nov.7

OPENWORKSHOP:"TroubleLettingGo:UnderstandingAddictionandtheDevelopingBrain"

PresentedbyFrankJ.Kros,MSW,JD
Baltimore

[\[RegisterforanOpenWorkshop\]](#)

[\[FullEventCalendar\]](#)



The Upside Down Organization (UDO), formerly The Institute for Transformation Education, is a nonprofit organization dedicated to the education and advocacy of Transformation Education, an organizational philosophy and operating system for child-serving organizations. UDO offers professional development experiences, mentoring services, learning tools and organizational branding that help improve the skills of people who educate, parent, guide and care for young people.

Visit [UDO online](#), contact 410-444-5415 or e-mail info@upside-downorganization.org.