

Holding It All Together

by Amy McCollom



It's All In Your Mind
I read once, "Whether you think you can, or you think you can't, you are right." 80% of accomplishing a goal is just in making up your mind that you are going to do it. It helps to be smarter than the average bear, with a good head on your shoulders, and a healthy batch of common sense. It's amazing what we could do if we set our minds to it. So success, or failure, is basically all in your head.

The human brain is so efficient, that it runs on autopilot most of the time without our permission. Thank goodness for that; we humans have enough to worry about just to try and stay alive. The world can be a dangerous place.

As great as our brain is at managing all of our bodily

functions and awareness, it is not entirely perfect. To begin with, our brain is like a 3-layered jawbreaker. It starts out with a hard core deep in the center that is the headquarter of emotion, fear, and hunger. The next layer is the middle thinner layer, which is the problem-solving and common sense dimension. Then finally the thin outer layer is the experience and higher thoughts layer.

The center core of our brain (the limbic system) is the dominating feature of our brain when we are born. Anything that the new baby experiences is quickly sent to the core to be analyzed. There are only 3 things the core of the brain wants to know: 1) Can I eat it? 2) Is this going to hurt me? 3) How do I feel

about it?

Hopefully as the child grows and matures, the middle layer of the brain becomes active. Usually by around 12 years old, a child will have developed a decent concept of cause and effect and will begin showing signs of common sense. Also reasoning skills will grow and less time will be spent in the safety of the brain core, where hunger, fear, and emotions live. This transformation is called gaining emotional intelligence.

The third layer of the brain is where the big ideas hang out. This is where abstract thinking takes place, and with hard work and a good imagination great inventions and scientific discoveries and thoughts that have never been thunk happen. Unfortunately, not everyone dares to activate the outer layer of the brain. It does take some moxy to think outside of the box, or kick it completely down, in my case.

Parents, your kid is going to accidentally knock their drink onto the floor repeatedly until they develop the brain capacity to learn cause and effect (probably around age 12). Don't get new carpet until everyone in the house is over 12. You wouldn't expect a 2-year old to do your taxes; it's kinda **Cont. on pg. 8**

WISE AND OTHERWISE

By Kent A. Stock



low shell.

Others, it was rumored, threw the prey into boiling water before the coloring process. They would later peel the skin and eat the meat. BEASTS! HEATHENS! As far as the tradition of decorating the hide, our family was more of the traditionalist school. We simply used little tablets dissolved in water and vinegar for color, whereas others wrote, drew pictures, or stuck tacky stickers to the little creatures. It was all great fun.

But on that fateful Saturday, I would not be dealing with these tame, store-bought beasts. I would be hunting the kind that came wrapped in plastic and edible on the spot. Oh yes. It would be myself versus nature and what would seem like hundreds of other children of all ages.

I sat in the family automobile in my bright green jacket and my light blue corduroy pants. I had my "gear" with me...a colorful basket filled with an unearthly green plastic substance known as "grass". It was unlike any grass I had ever seen nor ever would, not even, many years later, in my college days.

But, I digress. The air was thick with anticipation as we pulled into the hunting grounds where it was immediately obvious I would not be alone on this mission. As we parked our vehicle next to the other "tanks" I was able to discern some familiar faces of my comrades from the neighborhood. But there were also many strangers, some rumored to be from out of town. There were older kids too, the veterans. Beads of sweat broke out on my tiny forehead as sense of what could be described as dread crept into my soul.

NONSENSE! I told myself as I stepped out of the car and into the bright sunshine... into the stares of thousands of children and their chaperones. My mother, who had been chosen to accompany me on this life journey, quickly found other mothers and fathers she knew and I hastily joined their children to run around aimlessly in unbounded excitement. All of us were dressed in what was, quite likely, the gaudiest pastel garments that could only be used once a year. Thankfully, we would outgrow them by the next year: only to be replaced, assuredly, by brilliantly hued garments of equally ridiculous luminosity.

Many of the parents were attired the same way too. It was as if the entire light end of the color spectrum had thrown up all over humanity. It was not, necessarily, a pretty sight. But we children didn't care. "They" were out there waiting...

The woman running the

show was trying her best to get everyone's attention. She, not to her benefit, was being assisted by an oversized rabbit going by the name of Peter Cottontail, whose head and hands were terrorizing the children my age and younger while simultaneously annoying the older kids. There was also a giant duck who performed anonymously and had a gigantic tail feather that knocked several children over on their pastel behind without ever seeming to notice or care. The duck smelled vaguely of what I would later come to recognize as beer but that may have been the enticement for him to dress up so foolishly. They all, along with our minders, were trying to herd us into groups by age. We were finally set and The Hunt would soon be on.

We, as the youngest, were taken to one area of the hunting grounds while the "vets" were taken further away. I watched them, their battle-hardened eyes steeled to what lie ahead. They marched toward their own destinies, with a few backward glances to younger siblings, and were gone. We were all now left standing in what might be called a row but only if one's eyes were crossed. But it was clearly determined by the frazzled hunt leader that this was going to be as good as it gets and everyone had better like it!

We were ready. A zigzag line of freakishly attired children, some whose parents had regrettably placed bunny ears on their heads, clutching baskets of the quite possibly toxic grass, ready to burst forth into the world of The Hunt.

ON YOUR MARK! A chill wind blew across the park area. GET SET! Heart racing... focus... listen... be ready to run... GO! With an ear-splitting scream that could only be made by small children and sorority sisters we were off. The cacophony even drew the attention of the older kids in the distance who raised their eyes, the parents grimaced, and the hung-over duck grabbed his swollen head in what was probably real pain. We didn't care, the little warriors we were. We were running with the wind through our rabbit ears, the swooshing of our windbreakers, and laughing hysterically. Thankfully, that which we were hunting had no ears to hear this riot draw closer.

Later, I would learn that some had turned back immediately and ran crying to their guardians. Others wandered aimlessly. While at least one, sat on the ground, and began shoving plastic grass into his mouth. I, on the other hand was speeding full tilt. Some chose to race toward the playground **Cont. on pg. 8**

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