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“Nurturing my brain to be the best person I can. What I can do to increase my brain capacity to be as capable as I possibly can”

The Mind

by

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Our brain is what defines us. Our mind dictates our actions and our thoughts dictate our mind. Mental illness is now the third largest killer in Australia; this is mainly caused by stress induced mental illness leading to suicide or self neglect. Quality of mental health is strongly influenced by ones upbringing, or nurturing and there is evidence that your genes and hormonal balance can affect the way you think. In this essay, by drawing on some of my past experiences, I will discuss how to nurture the brain to create the best person that we can be and make the most of our brain. For the mind is a terrible thing to waste.

We seem to be conversing all day, every day, but actual communication of sharing ones experiences is low. When I ask peers what occupation their parents have, too often is their answer ‘I don’t know...’. This shows a clear lack of communication in the family environment. With nearly one in every two couples who marry divorcing, often leaving the kids in the middle is not helping. At the dinner table families need to sit together and talk of their day’s events. They should not be separately glued to the multiple televisions or computers in the house, and families should let the kids learn from their parent’s experiences. By having effective conversations, the children will have the opportunity to be pre informed for life’s difficulties and not learn lessons the hard way by having to go through the mistake themselves. If the family has broken apart, there should always be support given from elsewhere. For example, every school and workplace should have councilors or a peer support team, and students/ workers must be informed of how to access the support. Many hotlines exist for people to talk about their personal problems with someone who would listen. Care must be taken while choosing friends and social groups, as friends can be a great uplifting force, but they can also bring you down. I am fortunate enough to be able to have the support from family and great friends I can always rely on. They sustain me through the tough times of life.

Self knowledge and respect is the main element to efficiency. Knowing what you work well with, what style of study you require, and most importantly, what you want from life. Having a sense of direction is an essential milestone for self development and strongly stems from acknowledging ones physical and cultural heritage to create a sense of belonging. You must understand what makes you who you are, including your strengths and weaknesses. By attaining this, you will know what information and situation you can handle and how to deal with it. In this age, information is more or less available to everyone, you can go on the internet, and as they say 'the world is at your fingertips'. This is not always good, there are many cases where this is dangerous and enough to daunt the average person. This abundance of information must be taken with a sense of proportionality; you must know what you need and can handle. You can look at our modern day relationships with information similar to a shopping trip verses being on a terrifying rollercoaster ride. If you know what you want and what you can handle, then you can siphon out harmful or unwanted aspects and then taking what you need, thus the 'shopping trolley' term. With this, you can be selective and compare the information that best suits you. If one does not have a sense of self, then they will be influenced and eventually bombarded with the information. This takes the unfortunate person on a rollercoaster ride of confusion, misunderstanding and inner turmoil. Without appropriate support in place, the subjected person may come across tragic consequences. At school I find mentoring programs and speeches made by ex- students to be beneficial, as we can learn from the seekers past mistakes and their road to success. Having inner peace, eliminating self doubt will reduce mind traffic, will enable you to focus and learn effectively.

With moral and cultural filters in place, you must ensure no barriers exist that could hinder your learning chances in life. Such prejudices can be in the form of racist, sexist and discriminatory nature. These barriers, in my opinion, serve no use other than to keep people unwittingly, in self protective cocoons and create unassertive conformists that are inflexible to change. I have been required to disregard my own close mindedness when my family decided to migrate to the nation of our heritage and live there for four years. This was definitely not an easy experience for me; the first years saw me struggling at school and detached from society. So much had changed, new home, school, friends...everything.

It was not until I realised that I was preventing myself from enjoying the happening, did I begin lowering my dysfunctional barriers. I let myself go with the flow, though remembering my sense of self. I made sure I made the most of an experience only granted to few. In my last year I was scoring straight A's and I had made lifelong mates. I also learned a lesson that not many teenagers would discover alone; one must embrace change, be assertive and understanding, be free of prejudice , be flexible in thoughts but not in principles and have an indestructible but realistic image of oneself. Just like Aristotle once said, 'it is a

mark of an educated mind to be able to entertain a thought without accepting it'. I feel privileged that I truly understand these principles and implement in all aspects of my life.

Travel in my childhood, without doubt, encouraged broadmindedness in me but it also took me out of my comfort zone. Being in a new situation with new problems, in my opinion, is the only way to gain valuable experience. I regularly push myself into challenges: whether it is the Duke of Edinburgh Enrichment Scheme, on the competitive sports field, in the school orchestra, in my reading and research and with my friends. I like to compare the human mind to a parachute; it doesn't work if it isn't open. Keeping in a safe perspective as well as an open mind encourages innovation and is a great motivator. I find meeting challenges head on and keeping procrastination to a minimum, encourages growth in character and an enjoyment for life. I believe that it is better to regret what one does in life than to regret what one does not do. I also believe there is more to intelligence than knowledge. Everyone has his or her strengths. Einstein once said that 'The intuitive mind is a sacred gift and the rational mind is a faithful servant. We have created a society that honors the servant but has forgotten the gift'. The modern day employer is now looking for workers with good communication skills and expertise in team work, not just having knowledge. Examples can be seen in the interview that is required to get into a medicine course. No longer is it adequate to have a high UAI; the student must also have good interpersonal skills.

With strong communication skills, self respect, direction, proportionality in perspective, and a broad scope of involvement to activities, the sky is the limit to your development of character and capability. Speak kindly, think clearly and live vibrantly.

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