

Counselor Chat

A resource for Mann Parents, from your School Counselor,
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The following article is by Seattle Times Columnist Jerry Large. He recently interviewed John Medina, author, and affiliate professor of Bioengineering at the University of Washington as well as director of the Brain Center for Applied Learning Research at Seattle Pacific University. Jerry offers us a few thoughts, on a lot of parenting issues, that I thought were worthy of sharing with you. Hope you enjoy.

Mr. Medina recently spoke at Seattle's Town Hall on the topic of his recent book, [Brain Rules](#).

Minding the Young Brain

By Jerry Large

Seattle Times staff columnist

The title of a talk John Medina is giving Wednesday caught my attention: "Brain Rules for Parents." Would he be talking about how to preserve one's own mind, while rearing children? Hmm ... why was that the first thought that flashed through my brain?

Actually, Medina will talk about helping children develop and grow. Medina is a developmental molecular biologist and research consultant. He is an affiliate professor of bioengineering at the University of Washington School of Medicine and director of the Brain Center for Applied Learning Research at Seattle Pacific University.

I wrote about his book "Brain Rules" last year. He's always fun to talk with, so I called and gave him a break from grading papers.

"The question I get asked all the time," he told me is, "how do I get my kid into Harvard?" He's too polite to roll his eyes, and besides, he understands this is a very competitive society. So he tries to answer.

"If you want to get your kid into Harvard, go home and love your wife, love your husband, love your partner," he said.

He backed up to explain.

"The single greatest predictor of academic success is executive function. It even trumps IQ." Executive function is the process in your brain that allows a Boeing engineer to design satellites, he said, and it is the process that keeps you from punching your boss in the nose. It's the ability to plan for the future, control impulses and make sense of external stimuli.

Emotional stability in the home is a strong predictor of good executive function. Create a loving home, then make sure your child gets plenty of sleep, which also aids executive function. Scientists have learned sleep is not about rest for the brain. "The brain is actually burning through a ton of energy at night." The night after you learn something, your brain is consolidating those memories.

Tell your teenager not to pull an all-nighter. Tell her to exercise before a hard class. "A great, powerful and practical way to boost executive function is to get kids off their butts and get them to exercise." It has to be aerobic exercise, and he recommends it for schools.

I described my son to Medina: sitting with his laptop on his lap, headphones plugged into his iPod, and phone in his hand, texting and doing homework. "Tell him, stop it now. Unplug everything." A few years of Apple aren't going to undo generations of evolution, he said. "You can't multitask. You are going to make 50 percent more errors and it is going to take you twice as long to do it."

He also tells parents to recognize that every kid is wired differently. When it comes to discipline or education, "parents have to get deeply engaged" to understand each child inside out. "That's a good argument for small class sizes, too," he said. But in one way, all children are alike. Babies come loaded with software for exploration. Give them room and opportunities to experiment and learn, he said.

Medina has been spreading that message all over since "Brain Rules" made The New York Times best-seller list.

A kid with a healthy brain is good for parental peace of mind.

Jerry Large's column appears Monday and Thursday. Reach him at 206-464-3346 or jlarge@seattletimes.com.

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News from the Counseling Office:

Available Counseling Groups: Changing Family Groups (Banana Splits) and Friendship Groups are forming. If your child could benefit from participating in a group, please contact me at 425.881.9696 or mmiller@verizon.net

Steps to Respect: The district adopted Bullying Prevention Program has been taught in the third grade and will soon begin in fifth grade. Watch for a letter coming home with more details.

Resources for Parents:

Queen Bees and Wannabes: Navigating the New Realities of Girl World and Boy World" author Rosalind Wiseman will speak at Eastside Catholic School on Wednesday, April 28th at 7PM. Wiseman is an internationally recognized expert on children, teens, parenting, bullying, social justice, and ethical leadership. Each year she works with tens of thousands of students, educators, parents, counselors, coaches and administrators to create communities based on the belief that each person has a responsibility to treat themselves and others with dignity. Eastside Catholic is located at 232-228th Ave. SE, Sammamish 98074, or contact Denise Jannusch at 425.295.3018 or djannusch@eastsidecatholic.org

Are you a parent of a child with special needs? Lake Washington PTSA has a monthly parent meeting for all parents of children with special needs. Meetings often include an informative and worthwhile speaker. For more information go to: <http://www.lwsd.org/Parents/Special-Education/Pages/default.aspx> or e-mail Chairperson, Beth Angelo at 4Bangelo3@verizon.net

Parenting Class calendar: Visit www.pasadler.org/calendar.pdf for a complete listing of parenting classes throughout the Puget Sound Area. Calendar provided by the Puget Sound Adlerian Society.

Need help next fall with school supplies or clothes? Contact me now, so I can be sure to include you next fall.