

HARDWIRED FOR WAR:

What Created This Battle in My Brain?



A Special Curriculum
For Young People
To Help Them Understand
Their War-Like Feelings

FOR AGES 11-14

by
Dr. Terrence Webster-Doyle
with Adryan Russ

based on the
Education For Peace Series books by
Dr. Terrence Webster-Doyle

Special Thanks and Credits

To Marvin Garbeh Davis, our courageous Liberian friend and now the Atrium Society Director of Peace Education for West Africa, who has helped more than 5,000 Liberian children of war understand and resolve conflict peacefully.



To editor, Adryan Russ, our exceptionally gifted literacy artist, who has assisted us in creatively crafting our programs for more than twenty-five years. We thank you, and the children and their parents and teachers thank you.



Atrium Society Publications
atriumsociety@gmail.com
www.youthpeaceliteracy.org
(800) 848 6021

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This curriculum is dedicated to:

**Peace Monument
Rollins College
Winter Park, Florida**

The Rollins College's Peace Monument, erected in 1938 and dedicated on Armistice Day by college president Hamilton Holt, consists of a German artillery shell surrendered by Germany at the end of the First World War mounted on a pedestal bearing the following inscription. What is left of the plaque still stands at the college in Mills Hall.

Peace Monument

Pause, passerby, and hang your head in shame.
This engine of destruction, torture and death symbolizes:

The prostitution of the inventor
The avarice of the manufacturer
The blood-guilt of the statesman
The savagery of the soldier
The perverted patriotism of the citizen
The debasement of the human race

That it can be employed as an instrument of defense of
liberty, justice and right in nowise invalidates the truth of the
words here graven.

— Hamilton Holt



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INTRODUCTION FOR TEACHERS

What Created This Battle in My Brain? A Genetically Programmed Instinctive Reaction

“Most honest combat vets will tell you, perhaps not eloquently but in their own way, the same thing: essentially that combat is in our human DNA and demands to be exercised...The question is, can we humans evolve peacefully, or will we succumb to instincts we can’t transcend?”

– Quote from former Marine Corp helicopter pilot in Vietnam

***Instinct Theory** states that motivation is the result of biological, genetic programming. Thus, all beings within a species are programmed for the same motivations. At the heart of this perspective is the motivation to survive — we are biologically programmed to survive. And, all of our behaviors and motivations stem from biological programming. Thus, our actions are instincts. Through the process of natural selection, individuals who were even slightly predisposed to engage in adaptive social behaviors were the “fittest” and tended to survive longer and to be more successful in passing their genes along to future generations. Even though these tendencies may not enhance our fitness in today’s world, eons spent in harsher environments have left us genetically predisposed to perform certain social behaviors when situational cues call forth ancient instincts.*

Biological Conditioning Is the Source of Conflict

The main objective in teaching this curriculum is to bring awareness to the role that psychological and biological conditioning play in creating conflict. The process in teaching this is to understand the key characteristics that make it possible for young people to grasp what this means — in their own lives and in the world. The first one is to help your students ask questions and think for themselves. This is true of many programs for young people, but most questioning for them is random and not cohesive or consistent and does not address conditioning as the source of conflict.

**What this curriculum is asking,
that goes beyond this generalization of random self-inquiry,
is that the right questions be asked, at the right depth,
and in the right developmental sequence leading the student
to be able to understand the role of conditioning
in creating conflict and hence preventing peace.**

At that critical point, the curriculum then assists them in making the connection with how conditioning occurring in their lives is, in fact, the incipient stage of conditioning that creates conflict in the world in what we call war — that we are the

world and the world is us, that what we do at any stage of human development is responsible for what happens in the world.

**In other words, students need to associate
the bullying on the playground with the bullying on the battlefield –
that they are founded on the same survival reactions,
that their basic primitive drives are essentially the same,
so when you are talking to your students
about the conflict that occurs in their lives,
the curriculum will make the necessary correlation
to the larger picture in the conflict in the world.**

And most importantly the curriculum will move them out of the abstraction of knowledge, of thought, to the actual observation of what thinking is pointing at, for this is the immediate insight that is necessary to nullify conditioned thinking as it's happening and prevent it from reoccurring habitually as it has in the past. In other words, the intent is to end conflict from conditioned thinking at the primary prevention level as it happens in each and every moment.

Too often understanding human conflict has been conventionally addressed in a remedial, reactive way at the secondary level of "resolution" through therapeutic or moralistic means, as in the case of individual conflict, or through diplomatic or political intervention, as in the case of social conflict — or it has been addressed at the tertiary level of managing conflict through judicial or military intervention. These remedial, reactive approaches do not address conflict at the primary prevention level in understanding and avoiding the fundamental factors that create conflict in the way we have been conditioned to act and are therefore essentially ineffective because they do not prevent conflict from happening in the first place.

Realizing what was necessary was the prevention of conflict at this level, I developed this curriculum to go beyond the surface of conditioned thinking to explore the foundation of conflict it creates in the way the brain is essentially hardwired for war, that it is rooted in the genetically programmed physical make up of the brain – in the fight or flight survival mechanism.

**What triggers this biological hardwired automatic survival reaction
is the instinctive fear of who and what
we *think* is a threat to “our” survival.
In this case of war it is the image of “the enemy,”
that ethnocentric ideological nemesis –“them” –
that is in competition with “us” for our survival.**

The conditioned image of “the enemy” is solidly in place due to the constant reinforcement it has received over time. This image created what you could call a biological self-defense blueprint, like a computer database, that over time has created an inborn or inherited pattern in the brain's physical structure in order to feel protected

and to therefore ensure its survival. It is acting automatically, on its own without our consciously doing it. It is a machine built like a robot to ensure its existence instinctively. It is like having something that makes you feel secure deep inside. It is what can be called a “genetically programmed instinctive reaction,” which simply means, that our brains are hardwired for war because we have inherited the tendency at birth for what we mistakenly believe will help us to survive. In other words, like being a puppet and someone else pulling the strings, it has us believing that what it’s doing will guarantee our continued existence when in actuality, it is threatening it because it doesn’t work any longer as it perhaps did in ancient times.

The information that has been put into our brain is like a software disk — it is information the culture you live in tells you what to do, how to act and — in certain cases — who is a threat to you, who your enemies might be. It is like a corrupt computer disk creating a virus that is killing us. It is like a driver of a car telling it where to go and it doesn’t see that it is going off a cliff. When confronted by a potential conflict due to what it supposes as a threat, it awakens our biological brain that is equipped for combat — which is like a car — it is like a hard drive – and off they go together along the same road to war they’ve been on since before we were born — inherited from generations of people before us.

That disk keeps getting put into our brain because we are used to it being there even though it doesn’t work for our survival any longer — it is maladapted — it’s not able to adapt to what is necessary. It’s corrupt. It doesn’t work. And being maladaptive it continues to activate inappropriately the old primitive brain to protect us when it is not necessary. This happens because it cannot tell the difference between a real threat and a supposed one. It reacts to the image of threat that the disk has been programmed to say is real.

Knowing this then, we can see that conflict created by this biological genetic program is no one’s fault. No one is to blame. The only thing is that it is our responsibility to look at it, to pay attention to it as it arises in the moment and to NOT react out of it. Then it has no place to go. This survival mechanism thinks it’s doing the right thing. It just doesn’t understand that it is misguided, that it’s not working to guarantee our survival any longer.

What it takes to rectify this maladaptive process is the innately competent mind of a young person with the right education to look anew at the old program that creates conflict by mistakenly trying to protect us from what seems to be a real threat to our survival when it is only a imagined one. In this fresh awareness, free of intellectual suppositions, one can see what is, without prejudice or without trying to correct or solve it, for conflict is not a problem to be solved but a reality to be observed. In this awareness, it can end. This is called “proprioceptive learning.” It is “noncumulative learning” as opposed to knowledge, which is accumulative learning, the gathering and analysis of information to arrive at a certain intellectual theory or conclusion.

Proprioceptive learning is the state of non-cumulative observation that sees the conditioned thinking as it is without judgment or trying to change it, and in that moment of observation realizes the danger of it and does not act on it, thus freeing the mind from its habitual conditioned divisive state of reaction.

Proprioceptive learning is an innate capacity for psychological self-correction. This faculty is self-operating in that it sees what is unhealthy in the thinking process and in the moment of intelligent awareness it nullifies the effect of the conditioned thinking, thus making it ineffective. One doesn't need to do anything, for proprioceptive learning is self-corrective in and of itself. But in order for proprioceptive learning to come into effect, the education of the young person has to address the nature and structure of conditioned thinking that is preventing this capacity from performing its innate capacity.

As Quantum Physicist Dr. David Bohm states, "We could say that practically all the problems of the human race are due to the fact that thought is not proprioceptive. Thought is constantly creating problems that way and then trying to solve them. But as it tries to solve them, it makes it worse because it doesn't notice that it's creating them, and the more it thinks, the more problems it creates – because it's not proprioceptive of what it's doing.

"One gives close attention to all that is happening in conjunction with the actual activity of thought, which is the underlying source of the general disorder. One does this without choice, without criticism, without acceptance or rejection of what is going on. And all of this takes place along with reflections on the meaning of what one is learning about the activity of thought."¹

¹ Bohm, David & Lee Nichol. *The Essential David Bohm*. London and New York, NY: Routledge, 2003. Also, see *Thought as a System* and *On Dialogue* by David Bohm.

A Special Note on Teaching this Curriculum

The 3Es: Experiencing Conditioning Is the Best Teacher

I use the acronym the “3Es” to demonstrate how we need to approach changing human behavior. The 3Es represent this learning process. This is what it means:

1. The first E is **Explanation**: It’s what I am doing right now. I am using thought to describe the learning process. If we both speak the same language and have had a similar background, then what is being explained will probably make sense. The intent of this is to create a common definition of what is meant by the “learning process.” One can call this stage “foresight.”

2. The Second E is **Example**: It’s the next step in learning. This is when one remembers something from his or her past that corresponds to the Explanation. In this way one “personalizes” the explanation in that one now thinks “Oh, I know what he is describing, because I remember when this happened to me.” For example, if I was explaining that the cause of bullying is conditioned thinking, one might see the truth of this in a past occurrence. “I remember that my teacher explained that Joe the bully picked on me because he was always picked on by his brother.” This stage can be called “hindsight.”

3. The third E is **Experiencing**: This is the stage that is not of thought. Thought is used to explain it, as I am doing here, but it’s not thought that is experiencing. The actual awareness of the fact of conditioning as it is happening in the moment is experiencing. This stage can be called “insight.” And it’s this stage that I call “proprioceptive learning” as I just explained in the last part of the Introduction.

When we are experiencing how we’ve been conditioned — in the moment — insight is being enhanced. This insight helps us see our conditioned reaction as it happens. In this moment of insight, our conditioned brain does not operate as it has in the past. In this moment, when we see how our brain has conditioned us — reaction can cease, because we are, in the moment seeing. This is an “aha” moment — when you suddenly realize how what you’ve said or done may have triggered a reaction.

This stage is the most important for it is the stage of awareness that can free the conditioned thinking by the observation of it alone. As Dr. Bohm said in

the quote at the end of the end of the Introduction,” ... all of this takes place along with reflections on the meaning of what one is learning about the activity of thought.” But the important difference about thinking abstractly about conditioning and understanding it, as Dr. Bohm has pointed out, is that the Explanations and the Examples come directly from the observation of conditioned thinking, therefore they are not an abstract theory or an intangible conclusion but rather enhanced awareness or insight.

This is what this curriculum is primarily trying to do – to create an “aha” moment that comes directly from the observation of conditioned thinking. This is the proprioceptive learning that will bring forth real understanding and in that understanding there is the possibility of being free of the conditioned thinking that has caused so much misery for so long.

I must mention again, just to be as clear as possible, this has nothing to do with thinking at this level for it is thinking that is being observed that is creating conflict. Thinking has its place in describing what is being seen but it’s not the answer or the solution to the problem of human conflict. That’s the conventional method we think that will answer all our problems. In technology and science this type of thinking is appropriate but in understanding human behavior and freeing us from psychological suffering, it has no place.

— *Dr. Terrence Webster-Doyle*