

# Using Play as a Tool in Kinesiology Balances

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### (I) HOW IT CAME ABOUT

I have been using Kinesiology to serve my clients in one-on-one balances or coaching since I became a registered Brain Gym<sup>R</sup> Instructor/Consultant and a registered Touch for Health Instructor in 1998. At that time, Kinesiology was a word foreign to many and the technology as a facilitating strategy was relatively new to me, too, as a consultant. So, I started off my coaching business with a heart, a vision, some skills and a lot of trust. Together with my husband, Conrad Ho, we set aside in our apartment a small room 70 sq. ft. in area as our coaching room, and we used a desk 3 ft. x 7 ft. in another room in our apartment as our home office.

As I do balances with people, I follow strictly the Brain Gym<sup>R</sup> five-step balancing protocol and all the Brain Gym<sup>R</sup> skills, adding in the marvelous Touch for Health goal-setting, interviewing and massage techniques, and some bits and pieces of NLP that I have been learning since 1993. I used these tools faithfully, boldly and achieved some results, in terms of the effects from clients, the increase in the number of clients who came for balances and the hourly fee I could charge for my sessions.

After doing one-on-one balances for about two years, what has been slowly became evident in my day-to-day practice, but has not yet rooted in my conscious belief system was that it does not matter what tools I use. The balances will work anyway. In another word, many tools – whether it is Touch for Health, Brain Gym<sup>R</sup>, or NLP - can be used to achieve the same good results within a balancing procedure.

In 2001, when I studied with a play therapist, Dr. Samuel W.C. Poon, I was inspired by one of his teachings. When we were discussing what toys were supposed to be suitable in a playroom for a play therapist, he said, “It doesn’t matter what toys you use, even the most basic toys. What matters is a good play therapist.” From then on, I started to freely experiment on using play as a tool in my balances. Now, play has become a vital element in my balances with my clients of all ages. Subsequently, I also used music as one of the tools, especially after learning from a music therapist in 2003. I love these tools. My clients love them, too!

## **(II) THE PROTOCOL**

What has remained unchanged over the last five years of practice, and I believe it is the strongest Educational Kinesiology element in my practice, is the 5-step balancing protocol. I find them very useful as it makes it easy for clients to learn from the balancing process. Let me remind the readers of what they are.

**STEP (1) Get the body in P.A.C.E.** - These are the four basic Brain Gym<sup>R</sup> movements that sets the body and mind physiologically ready for new learning, both for the client and the facilitator. To use a computer metaphor, the function of it is like switching on the computer so that it is ready to work on its files.

**STEP (2) Set a goal** - It gives the client a focus on what he wants to achieve in that balancing session. The function of it is like locating all those files with the word “stress” in it.

**STEP (3) Do Pre-checks** - These are noticing opportunities. They give the client and facilitator a sense of where they are right now. The function of it is similar to

opening all those files with the word “stress” so that they are ready to be changed.

**STEP (4) Learning Menu** - Activities that can be done by client alone or with the facilitator together to create a change in the system. The function of it is like pressing the delete button to delete all the “stress” words in the files.

**STEP (5) Do Post-checks** - These are opportunities for the client and the facilitator to notice what changes the client have made. It is like pressing the save button to save the changes to the files permanently.

Another element that has remained unchanged is the Touch for Health goal-setting and interviewing techniques that I learnt from the founder, Dr. John Thie. I use it to elaborate on the Edu-K verbal or action goal-setting process in STEP (2). Goal-setting is very important as it gives the client a focal point for change. I believe that when the appropriate goal is set, the change has already been started to take place no matter what technique you use. For adults and teenager clients, I often spend some time actively listening to them, asking them for what they want.

These by far, together with muscle-checking, have been the most consistent tools that I have been using in my personal-coaching work.

### **(III) USING PLAY IN THE BALANCING PROCESS**

#### **(1) Who Plays?**

Play can be used as a balancing tool with all clients – adults and children alike.

#### **(2) When to Play?**

Play is most often used in STEP (4), i.e. the Learning Menu, of the balancing protocol. Play is one of the things on the Learning Menu list, besides any Brian Gym<sup>R</sup> movements, Brain Gym<sup>R</sup> In-Depth techniques or Touch for Health techniques. Sometimes, play can be used in STEP (2), i.e. Goal-setting, mainly as part of an action goal. For example, someone who would like to set a goal “I love myself” can use wooden blocks to build himself and feel how and what he loves it. Short games can be used in STEPS (3) & (5) as pre- and post-checks, e.g. hand-eye coordination games to check for physical skills. In rarer situations, but it still happens, when P.A.C.E. cannot reset the system, play can do the trick. Conrad one time had to play fist-fighting with a client to help him back in P.A.C.E. Play can also be used as an ice-breaking tool between the child client and the facilitator, especially when they come for the first time. Last but not least, handy toys in and outside the coaching-room can be good time-killers for young clients when they need to wait for

their parents who might be involved in a long conversation with the facilitator.

### **(3) Which Games to Play?**

Any game is possible. It can be spontaneous or planned, with or without toys. That having said, it is a good idea to include some toys in your coaching room for the sake of convenience. Toys that are available in my coaching room include:

- art toys such as colour pencils, crayons, drawing paper of different sizes, modelling compound (playdoh);
- games that spark creativity such as wooden blocks of different shapes and sizes with no design on them;
- games that involve gross motor activities such as football, basketball and net (we use small and soft ones. Even so, many children love them!), jumping rope;
- games that involve some thinking such as UNO, playing cards, Monopoly, Scrabble, Chinese chess;
- games that involve hand-eye coordination such as any throwing game, marbles, Finger Pools & Mikado Spiel, piling game (e.g. with wooden blocks);
- toys that help generate imaginative role-play such as a few sets of plastic soldiers; toy police equipment such as handcuff; toy guns and targets (with very safe, soft rubber sticking bullets); toy make-ups and different types of plastic jewellery;
- different types of toy animals made from different substances;

All these categories are for reference only. Any game or toy can be used for any purposes. Often, if the client is a child, he will be able to tell you what he would like to use that game for! Just follow the flow.

Feel free, also, to make up your own game, and to play any game that you have played before as a child, such as stone, paper scissors. One game that one client liked, in particular, was playing football match by two teams of football players made by cardboard paper.

### **(4) How to Determine which Games to Play?**

The most convenient way is to let the client choose by his own noticing. If in doubt, one can use muscle-checking to confirm. In my view, it is appropriate for the facilitator to choose the game for the client, if the client has no idea what he wants to play.

### **(5) What are the Benefits of Play?**

- Most important of all, it is interesting and fun. I have seen child clients who

were reluctant to do certain movements or massages, but I have never met ANYONE who refuses to play.

- Play inspires the liberation of creative energy within the client.
- Play is a very good way to build a sense of co-operation, rapport and trust with the client, even when the client is non-verbal and introvert. It takes away the pressure on the client and facilitator to use language as the only means of communication.
- It creates a safe-space for the expression of “destructive” urges. For instances, some people derive great pleasures when they shoot down their own fortresses after building them.
- It also creates a safe-space for the expression of more “extreme” emotions or behaviours, both for the client and facilitator, e.g. shouting, laughing loudly, sometimes even cursing.

#### **(IV) ROLE OF THE FACILITATOR**

The facilitator can join in the play process with different levels of participation. Degrees are as follows:

- Full participation: the facilitator becomes one of the game player. Active participation is expected.
- Observer or commentator: the facilitator becomes a third-person observer who is watching the game only. Comments about what you notice can be made. Avoid value judgments.
- No participation: in times of solo creative play, facilitator will have no involvement. To give the client more personal space, I may leave the coaching room and ask the client to call me in again when he is finished.
- In cases where there is more than one client is involved, e.g. mother and child, play can be between both of them, or among all of them and the facilitator.

#### **(V) A NOTE ON WINING AND LOSING**

Bear in mind that when you play competitive games, players are bound to win or loose. It is best if the facilitator becomes sensitive to the fact that winning and losing does create an emotional impact on yourself and on your clients. Some clients, especially some children, can over-react when they loose in games. I once came across a young girl who burst out crying and yelled to leave in the middle of the session after she lost a game with me. However, these are only exceptional cases, and most clients do not fall in the over-reactive category.

When I meet with such clients, or when I want to exclude the emotional arousal of

winning and loosing in the balance, I just turn to cooperative games, e.g. building a castle together.

#### **(VI) CONCLUSION - GETTING STARTED**

Play is a great tool for any Kinesiologist in his tool kit. It is effective, fun and easy to use. It is not expensive. It serves clients of all ages. What you may need, as I have mentioned before, is a heart, a vision, some skills and a lot of trust. Trust yourself, trust the process, and the magic will flow through you!