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Brain balance program for autism

What is it? In 2006, Dr. Robert Melillo, a chiropractor, entered into a partnership with his nephew to launch the Brain Balance franchise model. Since then, more than 130 franchises have been purchased across the country. The concept is based on Dr. Melillo's book: *Disconnected Children: The Innovative Brain Balance Program for Children with Autism, ADHD, Dyslexia and Other Neurological Disorders*. He describes his program as a non-medical, drug-free approach based on cutting-edge brain science to achieve optimal body and brain balance. He argues that children who have learning or behavioral problems have inadequately developed sensory systems and engines and because the brain is built from the bottom up, sensory and motor work must be done before any superior, behavioral or academic learning change can actually happen. It addresses this alleged deficit with motor exercises (e.g. rhythm and timing, primitive and postural reflexes, eye-muscle balance) and sensory exercises (e.g. hearing, vision, smell, taste, touch). Academic competences are also addressed (briefly). Sensory, motor and academic work is condensed into 3 one-hour sessions per week at a centre. Your child is taught by a coach - an unlaught person who does not need to have a background in education, health, occupational therapy, chiropractic, or any related field. A blogger who got details of the perspective of a former center employee reports that most staff are very young (21/22 on average), without actual relevant qualifications, and there is high turnover; most do not stay more than a few months. This could be partly due to wages; \$10 an hour. In addition to the 3 hours a week your child receives at a center, the program includes nutritional recommendations and exercises that should be done at home. Most families are advised that their child requires two 3-month sessions at a cost of \$6,000 per session, plus several hundred dollars for evaluation and owner nutritional supplements (including KidGenius vitamins that help promote brain growth!). The total cost is about \$13-14,000. The cost per session works out at around \$182/hour, of which the trainer receives approximately \$10. None of the costs are covered by health insurance. Can you help? Let's break the question on which part(s) of it work, and for whom? Let's start with whom. I am skeptical that children with all the different issues they claim to deal with can be helped with the same basic treatment. A blog titled *Total and Utter Neurobollocks* states: They claim to effectively treat almost any developmental disorder under the sun, including autism, ADHD, Asperger's, Tourette's and dyslexia, without the use of Medication. This is because all these disorders are (apparently) caused by an underlying functional imbalance or or activity (brain) in and between the right and left sides of the brain. Any alarm bell rings yet? They should be. Every time someone comes along with a miracle cure for a number of unrelated conditions, and has come up with the equivalent of a unified field theory of neurodevelopmental disorders, something has to be a bit fishy. There are also several parts of IT to consider – sensory motor exercises, academic skills tutoring, and dietary changes each expected to have different effects (if any). Some aspects of the program interventions may prove useful for individual children. I'm all for good nutrition, academic skills tutoring, and parents spend quality time exercising with their kids, for example. But there is no indication that the central theoretical basis of the program - that sensory-motor exercises balance the brain and improve functional connectivity - has some basis in fact. This aspect of the program is based on speculation, not credible evidence. One parent, Natalie Hanson, recounted her family's experience in a blog. She wrote: We went into it very hopefully. So... He's a chiropractor. Any. If the program works, who cares? Two years later he wrote: Many of you have come across the blog and emailed for guidance on whether to pursue brain balance for your children. It is so difficult to hear their stories and their despair, which (in many cases) reflects our own. But, knowing what we know now, I don't think we'd do it again... The most valuable thing we've done is remove gluten and dairy from our children's diet, and get their genome assigned so that we can address underlying problems with their biochemistry through food, supplements and ultimately medications. Later this year he wrote: I keep having so many questions about the brain balance of hopeful parents. I would like to reiterate again that I would not recommend investing in this program for your children. It is extremely expensive, and the results are fleeting at best. It is better to change your eating habits and find other ways to tackle behaviors. I know this may be unpopular for those of you who are looking for answers, but these programs are not what you are looking for – what you are promising is unfortunately too good to be true. Harriet Hall, a retired family doctor who writes about pseudoscience and questionable medical practices on the Science-Based Medicine website, wrote one review, saying she was initially skeptical because miraculous results are reported (She spoke for the first time!), but says the biggest red flag is that they claim their program is but provide mainly testimony as evidence. Anecdotal reports provide no evidence of the effectiveness of a treatment. Dr. Sala Sala the only research study mentioned on the website that they speculate that ADHD is related to functional disconnection, hemispheric imbalance, subcortical dysfunction, lack of temporal coherence, and a difference in the level of arousal between the hemispheres. They do not provide any evidence that they are characteristic of ADHD or were present in their subjects, or that their treatments specifically changed any of them. They assumed a dormant right hemisphere (it was unclear why) and provided interventions they assumed (without any supporting evidence) should remedy the alleged imbalance. When I checked the brain balance website for research lists I found that several articles and some studies are now listed. Some sound surprisingly convincing. A 2013 randomized control study (this part sounded good!) reports the elimination of ADHD symptoms in 81% of participating children after completing a 12-week program. As if that weren't enough, 60% also achieved a two-1h level academic increase and 35% achieved a four- level increase in academic skills! Sounds too good to be true, doesn't it? The lead author was Dr. Gary Leisman. I got his name, and the fifth success that appears is a finding of scientific misconduct published by the NIH in 1994. Apparently, this authority falsely claimed to have earned an M.D. degree that he never obtained, for having been a professor of neurology at Harvard Medical School (he had no such affiliation), and having been awarded 13 U.S. patents (he never was). Since then, he has been working in Cuba and Israel. Other articles include tenuous links to brain balance methodologies of some solid research findings. For example, the finding that children with autism have higher-than-normal connectivity between certain areas of the brain was extrapolated to further support the brain balance theory of functional disconnection... The Brain Balance Program combines personalized sensory-motor and cognitive activities to repair poor communication. Why isn't your search anymore? Well, first, neuroscience has moved far beyond the simple left brain/right dichotomy. In addition, the idea that the various conditions are caused by a disconnection syndrome between the two hemispheres is pre-set enough not to get research funding. Why don't people who don't make money from brain balance programs fund some research? Melillo has argued that Brain Balance is too busy treating patients to do rigorous scientific studies. How convenient. Can it hurt? Yes - your pocketbook. What do parents have to do? Spend your time and money on treatments that are effective. dietetics, academic skills tutoring, exercise, and perhaps even some sensory-motor therapy - depending on the child's needs - provided by someone trained and licensed to provide it (a good good one or physiotherapist, for example). What I hope to achieve here is to give an impartial review of brain balance. I know too well the energy spent trying to do what's best for your child. I've spent hundreds if not thousands of hours researching things to help my children, especially my middle child, who completed the brain balance program in 2015. In 2014, when we were considering the program and saw the price tag, we did our due diligence to examine the program. It wasn't cheap (about \$10,000) and not covered by insurance. This site contains affiliate links through the Amazon Associates program and purchases made through these links will help defer the costs of maintaining this website (at no additional cost to you). This is absolutely separate from the Brain Balance franchise. Is brain balance a thymus? It was frustrating to find that most people labeled Brain Balance a scam. These comments do not come from other parents whose children completed the program. I wanted to hear from parents ... Did they see an improvement in their child with the program? Did they think it was worth the heavy tag? Was Brain Balance the golden ticket to help your son? Hard to find unbiased reviews The few reviews I discovered from other parents revealed that most saw improvement, although some not as much as they would have liked. What I have done in this post is given an objective review of brain balance by establishing the benefits and disadvantages to the brain balance program in an impartial way, as well as offering some other advice. If you are a parent or cure-taker looking into the brain balance program for your child, I hope you find this useful. Some background My son (now 8), was diagnosed with developmental delays, speech and dirty engine around the age of 2 years. We saw signs of delays before that, but my daughter (now 10 years old) was also a late walker and talker (she had a blast from both at 18 months) and we thought that might be the norm for our children. My son didn't crawl until 11 months, walked at 16 months, and didn't really speak until age 3-3 1/2. I had and have motor planning difficulties. We now have an official diagnosis of a neuropsychologist of dyspraxia, which is a brain-based condition that affects the ability to coordinate and plan motor tasks. (we received this diagnosis a year ago, when I was 7 years old). We found out about Brain Balance shortly after his 4th birthday. Much of what we heard was new to us. We had never heard of primitive reflexes. Learn how retained primitive reflexes can be the source of blockages to normal day-to-day operation and making your brain stay in a baby brain-type state was fascinating to us. We had heard of Brain Balance through a home school convention and the assessment was actually free for anyone who had attended the convention. Because of this, we decided that we had nothing by doing the initial assessment. After the evaluation, we learned that our son had retained 5 of the 8 primitive reflexes that brain balances tests. The staff were very friendly and helpful. There was a reason why things were harder for him. After doing our research, we decided to bite the bullet and dive into the program. We emptied our HSA and college savings for children and made it happen. Our thinking was that there wouldn't even be college in our son's future if we didn't remove these obstacles first. Nuts and bolts from the brain balance program Our son was recommended to complete 6 months of the program (or 72 sessions). He went every Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday and completed one-hour sessions with his coach. They recommended we adhere to a diet without gluten, without dairy, without soy, without processed sugar. We did this and were strict about it during those 6 months. Some supplements were recommended. The main thing I remember is probiotic. As part of the program we did her home exercises on the days she didn't have a session with her coach. Do I recommend the program to parents who consider it? That depends on your situation. If you have an older child you have already tried a lot of interventions with, this may be a good option for you. If money is not a problem, I would say for sure, do it. You will be able to accomplish a lot in a short order of time. It's not a magic pill though. Know that exercises at home take time. And dietary changes take work and preparation, not to mention an increase in your grocery bill and your child's possible resistance. Also, if you have a smaller child, motivation could be a problem. This was one of our biggest obstacles. Getting our son to do the exercises with us at home was hard work. If you are thinking How can we afford this without getting a second mortgage on the house!? ... I have some suggestions of other things to try first: 1) Primitive reflexive integration: Finding an OT (Occupational Therapist) that can help with primitive reflexive integration. You'll need to ask and do your research to find an OT that will work with your child to integrate primitive reflexes. We had 3 OT before we had what my son has now. Its current OT takes a more integrative approach and is covered by insurance. If I had found it before brain balance, we probably wouldn't have done it. It is important to remember that OT's are not all the same! Do your research! 2) Diet: Try some diet changes at home first. The diet can be huge for some children, especially children with sensory problems and digestive disorders. I'll warn you this can be overwhelming to navigate. 3) Vision Therapy: Look at vision therapy, which is sometimes covered by insurance. A big part of Brain Balance, at least for us, were vision exercises. As far as I know, vision therapy does the same kind of and more extensively (and under the care of an optometrist). *We are currently in the process of researching Vision Therapy, as recommended by our son's OT and Neuropsychologist. **Edited to add: Go here to read about our vision therapy results. 4) Biomedical interventions: Biomedical research interventions. Often children with developmental delays or other issues have trouble detoxifying and are clinging to toxins, especially heavy metals. Looking back, I wish I had done a detox protocol before starting the brain balance. I think we probably would have seen a more lasting change if we had done it first. For detoxification, I suggest investigating and investigating advanced TRS. Please know that it is also my personal sales link. For more information, see this group FB: TRS - A safe heavy metal detox. There are other detox protocols out there as well. I'm not familiar with them. 5) Brain Balance Home Program: Read the book *Disconnected Children* by Robert Melillo (founder of Brain Balance) and try to implement a program at home. A great attraction of Brain Balance is that it encompasses most of the above. This makes it less overwhelming to have a unique store. Edited to add: Another resource worth checking out is Dianne Craft's Brain Integration Program. You can find Dianne's website here. Other brain balance considerations is a franchise. It's not a medical institution. They are classified as a learning centre. The coach with your child will be working for each session is not a doctor or a certified therapist. They are employees of Brain Balance. I will say, our coach did a great job with our son. We also met with the director (who was very knowledgeable and competent) at the beginning of our son's six months, once in the middle, and then at the end. If we could go back in time, would we do it again? This question is hard to answer and to be honest, I go back and forth about it. Not that it matters because what is done is done. However, I realize that my answer to this question may be significant for someone researching the program. In general, I answer yes to this question. We saw major improvements within six months. Most notably, our son was able to integrate 4 of his 5 retained reflexes (I must point out here, however, he earned his Moorish reflection again). His hearing comprehension when from a 3.5-year-old to a 6.5-year-old, that was HUGE. We felt that through the brain balance program we were able to get to know our son better, which is significant. However, if I could go back to the beginning, when we first discovered all the delays of our At age 2 or 3, then I would have found an OT that made the reflexive integration and did some heavy metal detox. Final thoughts Finally, I don't think brain balance is a thymus, but I also don't think it's the Response. I really hope that this impartial review of brain balance is useful for parents considering the program. If you have any questions do not hesitate to contact me, through the contact form on my page. Blessings to you on your journey with your child! And if you're overwhelmed, remember it's a marathon, not a sprint. Disclaimer: The purpose of this blog post is to give an impartial review of the brain balance of someone who has had a child go through it. I'm not a medical professional. Any advice I give here is my own and based on personal experience. Experience.

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