



THE INCREDIBLE AMAZING BRAIN IN CHILDREN OF DIVORCE

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By Linda Ranson Jacobs

01/20/2012



For the next few weeks we will look at how understanding what is happening in the brains of children of divorce will allow you to develop better relationships and impact these kids in a positive manner.

The brain is an amazing and incredible part of the human make up. God in His amazing creation created the human brain that can out last, out do and out perform any computer or electronic gadget now or those yet to be discovered.

What are mirror neurons?

A helpful discovery for kid people was the discovery of mirror neurons. This is a gigantic concept and if it were possible I would have bells and whistles going off in this article to bring attention to this. Daniel Goleman in “Social Intelligence” (Bantam) explains it this way,

“One person’s inner state affects and drives the other person. We’re forming brain-to-brain bridge – a two-way traffic system – all the time.”

In other words, we can catch each other’s emotions.

Essentially mirror neurons allow what is happening in your brain to be projected onto other people. When you smile, it can activate the mirror neurons in another person’s brain and they will mirror your expression. Are you beginning to see what an important concept this is when working with those sad or angry children from divorce in your classes?

Have you ever been having a bad day - the type of day where you feel grumpy and out of sorts? You walk into a store and the sales person greets you with a smile and all of her interactions with you are upbeat and positive. All of a sudden, you feel your mood lifting and you are not quite so grumpy any longer? These are mirror neurons at work. Kids mimic your expressions





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“Mirror neurons show you what it’s like to experience what others do” (Bruce Perry, Born for Love)

Mirror neurons at work - “Have a good day.”

When I owned a child care, I used to wonder when I was having a bad day why the children and even some of my staff seemed to fit right in and experience a bad day also. Now I know. Their mirror neurons were mimicking what was going on in my brain. I learned that no matter what I was feeling or thinking when I went into any room I went in humming or singing and with smile on my face. I had to think to myself,

“Have a good day.”

One of the biggest compliments I have ever received was when a staff person said to another staff,

“What I admire about Linda is the fact that no matter what the day has brought or what time it is, she always enters my room singing. It can be 6:30 in the morning or 5:00 in the afternoon and she could have been here all that time but she still comes in singing and never ceases to lift my spirits.”

Mirror Neurons and the Child of Divorce

Children of divorce see a lot of grumpy and angry people. These expressions are especially true at the beginning of the separation of their parents. The parents might be sad, angry, distracted, confused and worried. Many times their facial expressions say it all. Kids see this day in and day out. When they come to church they need to experience positive and upbeat emotions. They need to experience joy and have leaders that ooze with joy, joy in the Lord.

Imagine being a lonely and confused child and the main adults in your life are negative and distracted. Now imagine walking into the Lord’s house and seeing happy, joyful and calm adults who seem to be having a good time. It makes it easy for a child to perk up. With the concept of mirror neurons, and our understanding of them, we know we can make things even better for these children.



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Giggling is contagious. Having a good time is infectious. Build relationships with these children and count on those all powerful mirror neurons to mirror your facial expressions back to you. It's so easy and it's free!

"All the days of the afflicted are evil; but he that is of a merry heart hath a continual feast." Proverbs 15:15 (KJV)

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Linda Ranson Jacobs is one of the forefront leaders in the area of children and divorce. She developed and created the DivorceCare for Kids programs. DC4K is an international program for churches to use to help children of divorced parents find healing within the arms of a loving church family. As a speaker, author, trainer, program developer and child care center owner, Linda has assisted countless families by modeling and acting on the healing love she has found in Jesus Christ. More great articles about how to successfully minister to the child of divorce in your church can be found at Linda's website [Healthy Loving Partnerships for Our Kids \(HLP4\) \[http://www.hlp4.com\]](http://www.hlp4.com). Linda also offers support, encouragement, and suggestions to help single parents and those working with single parent children. She can be reached by e-mail at Linda@hlp4.com.