

FOCUS ON THE FAMILY

BY DR BILL MAIER

HOW YOUR CHILD LEARNS

What we learn depends a lot on how we learn. Not all kids process information the same way, and a key to helping your child excel in school is understanding how they learn.

In short, a "learning style" is the channel that kids use to organize information in their brain.

Some kids are visual learners. They work best when they can watch or read their subjects.

Others are more auditory. They need to hear, speak and discuss a subject in order to process it quickly.

A third learning style is called kinesthetic. These are children who learn better when they're moving around, flexing their large muscles.

And tactual learners work best when utilising their small motor muscles. These kids are likely to tap their pencils or twirl their hair while doing homework.

Understanding how your child learns helps you make informed decisions regarding their education.

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COFFEE WITH ONE BRAVE 'BOTAK'

NTUC Income's PR chief can barely look at the head she had shaved for charity – but says it was worth it

NOW that she has shaved off her shoulder-length hair for charity, something she had adamantly refused to do, Caroline Fernandez has indeed "walked the talk". And she says she now knows what it means to "give till it hurts".

That feeling will last about a year, the amount of time, she has been told, it will take for her locks to grow back to its original length.

As NTUC Income's head of public affairs, she is adept at "talking the talk", keeping well burnished, among other things, the insurance cooperative's image as a corporate citizen with a heart.

The 41-year-old is relieved the head-shaving is over and "overwhelmed" that she could have raised \$100,000 for Action For Aids (Afa), but it wasn't an easy thing to agree to. It drove her to tears.

When Mr Tan Suee Chieh, Income's chief executive, asked that she lop off her tresses on Dec 29 for the company's recent Project Love charity drive, her answer was an empathic "No!"

It haunted me. The day I said yes, I went to my room and cried. I am such a girly girl, I love going to the hairdresser ...

Caroline Fernandez



WEE TECK HIAN

"I can help with the project, I can do the PR, but cut my hair? No, no," she recounted. She now covers her bald head with a bandana "all the time".

At last count, Project Love had raised around \$365,000, exceeding its target of \$300,000.

In retrospect, Ms Fernandez said it was a lot of fun, but it did take a lot out of her emotionally. After the pledges started coming in, she knew there was no turning back.

"It haunted me. The day I said yes, I went to my room and cried. I am such a girly girl, I love going to the hairdresser ..."

Those are now tears of joy as the funds represents a lifeline for Afa. Advocacy groups such as these, she said, are the first to be struck off the lists of corporate sponsors in tough times.

"Afa is not an easy cause to get money for," said Ms Fernandez, naming

funding and staffing as contingent to its work. She has been an executive committee member for four years, and associated with them for more than 10.

Her bosses' agreeing to Afa as a beneficiary was a crucial point in her final "yes", she said. With the money, Afa will now concentrate on the "most crucial" of its programmes – medication subsidies. In 2007, Afa dispensed \$82,200 worth of such subsidies, helping 127 patients.

Although NTUC Income participated in other fundraising events for charity last year, those were on an adhoc basis. Project Love 2008, on the other hand, was a concerted, full-blown campaign. The chief executive, she said, wanted it to involve Income's staff and for them to have fun while doing it. Mr Tan also recognised the need for grand gestures to engage attention, such as Ms Fernandez's hair-shaving, having a senior manager go without food for 42 hours and female managers in costume washing cars.

Apart from the fact that Income is no longer the conservative company that it was once made it out to be, Ms Fernandez said she also learnt that despite the bad times, fundraising is still possible. About 85 per cent of the funds raised by Project Love were from individual donors.

"Maybe what we can give is limited, but our ideas can bring in other people, and contributions, too ..."

Even as Ms Fernandez hinted that plans are on the drawing board for Income's next fundraising drive, she is still coming to terms with her shaven look.

"I have not removed my bandana," she said, "I am scared to. My nieces and nephews think their aunty is cool, but I don't want others to look at this short, middle-aged woman and think she is trying so hard to be cool."

Apart from the TODAY photographer, the other person who managed to persuade her to remove the headscarf was her mother – whom she had not told about the dare until the weekend before it was due to happen – on New Year's Day.

"Her eyes teared up, but she kept saying: 'It's good, it's good.'"

That, I think, would be an understatement.

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