

Unblocking Action to Develop Self-Discipline:

Running, Studying, Diary Writing, Playing a Musical Instrument, etc.

By Jerome Liss, M.D.

There are specific methods that the Counselor can use in order to help the Protagonist (the person seeking help) develop his capacity for an independent action that requires "self-discipline". These methods are based on an understanding of the nervous system. Recent research regarding the neurophysiology of emotions, for example, highlights the functioning of the basal ganglia, which coordinates "action routines". When an action changes from one that is "effortful, difficult, hard to accomplish," to one that is "as easy as pie," what has happened? The brain area that controls that particular action has changed. When the action was "effortful," the **frontal lobe**, in the cerebral cortex, was controlling the action. When the action, with time and practice, became effortless, smooth, automatic and more pleasurable, the control shifted to the **basal ganglia**. (Rolls, 1999)

In another words, a newly initiated action begins in the higher cerebral cortex (the frontal lobe), where every movement is consciously executed, but where there is no smooth flow. When the action becomes "an easy habit," the control has descended into the sub-cortical basal ganglia, which creates "automatic action routines," otherwise known as "habits." This article will introduce a strategy that the Counsellor can use as he helps his Protagonist shift his action control from the effort-making frontal lobe in the cerebral cortex to the habit-making basal ganglia of the sub-cortex.

Sociological Background

We live in a culture of passivity! When people return home from work, they may be obligated to accomplish certain chores for the family or for oneself: Clean up, cook, telephone someone. But if the person is **not** "obligated" to act, the tendency will often be **to sit in front of the television**. I prefer to call this "the boob tube" phenomena. ("Boob" means "stupid".) What does it take to flick on the TV? An ape or a dog can be trained to do this. And the society has trained us to do this in order to keep selling their products that are advertised on the boob tube. A secondary consequence, of course, is that action for changing society – going to an ecology group, a neighbourhood tenants' meeting, Amnesty International or a Peace group – is obliterated. Robert Putnam's important study, **Bowling Alone**,() documents that since the era of television people's participation in social networks outside of the home, including friendship networks, has been running out of gas. It's easier to sit home and turn on the switch that will wash out the mind.

When the Action Program Drops Out

What happens "**when the Action Program drops out**"? We explored this dilemma in several groups of Self-Development based on the Biosystemic Method.

The experimental method was simple: Each group participant, in turn, did a psychodrama of returning home after work. It was imagined that there was no one in the house, in order to avoid the stimulation that can come from another person. And participants were asked to avoid performing habitual actions of distraction: telephone calls, opening the refrigerator, cleaning up the house. The goal was to discover what happens "**when the Action Program drops out.**" And each one was asked to say out loud everything that passed through the mind. The result was very consistent.

Most people, at the moment that there was "nothing to do," began to feel "a drop of energy" or some other physical discomfort. "I feel empty in the belly." "My mind goes blank." "I'm

feeling down." "I feel tensions in the chest." "My eyes hurt." Etc. In addition, negative attitudes toward oneself or life began to mount: "I feel lost." "I don't feel happy." "I feel apathetic." "There's something I should be doing, but I don't know what." "I feel that nobody cares for me." More extreme: "Life seems pointless!"

Conclusion: When the Action Programs that comes from the work environment, routine tasks, relationships, or obligations, are momentarily put aside, we experience a **loss of energy** and **negative attitudes** toward ourselves or others. If we were to take a picture of the brain at that point, (as Positron Emission Tomography permits), we would find that the Frontal Lobe (intention) – Basal Ganglia (action) connection is no longer active. And the rest of the brain suffers!

Here is our hypothesized neurophysiological overview: Lower vitality would be due to the loss of brainstem neuromodulators. The amygdala (LeDoux,1999) and the central gray matter undergo alterations, creating emotional discomfort and even pain. The very large and complex cingulate gyrus(Bush,2000) becomes deactivated in the area devoted to the body scheme ("My body feels dead") and, at the same time, over-activated in the area connected to negative emotional evaluation: "There's something wrong. I don't know. But I just don't feel right." At the same time thalamic processes, that organize attention (Edelman,2004), are decreased, creating mental disorganization and difficulty in self-initiated focus of attention. Finally, the frontal-parietal-temporal-posterior lobe processes and connections of the cerebral cortex are deactivated, creating a sort of "no man's land" in the mind.(Renaud,1967)

We might feel astonished that so many brain areas and psychological functions can be disrupted by the momentary loss of our Action Program. But when we understand that the brain functions according to the principle of "distributed processes," (Gerald Edelman's concept), such extensive brain disruption and disequilibrium becomes comprehensible. "Distributed processes" means that means that almost **all** brain areas are contributing "something" to our total mind-brain dynamic. Therefore, any central or "key" area in a complex network can disrupt countless other processes.

Action That is Distracting

And what happens to the person who lives in this state of apathy and emotional flatness? "I don't like it. I want to avoid it." The group participants, therefore, discussed their various **methods for typically avoiding this state of emptiness and discomfort**. The most frequent way is by turning their attention to a simple form of distraction. Television is the number one choice! Reading the newspaper is also frequent. Some just lie down on the divan or go to bed. The "advantages and disadvantages" of these choices were discussed. Of course, each person decides for himself or herself what is considered "advantageous": "Getting the news" from the television. "Reading something interesting" in the newspaper. "Just thinking" when lying down. Another said, "Lying down and listening to music lets me float." Cleaning up the house is certainly useful. Making a tea or coffee can feel like "a positive transition." Opening the refrigerator to take a fruit seems reasonable. Stuffing oneself with cake or chocolate was admitted to create a problem. Telephoning "Mama" or another close relative created mixed reactions: "Am I calling because I really want to? Or because the other expects me to?" Telephoning a friend was usually regarded as more positive, unless the friend was "too superficial" or "always needed help." Going out to take care of the garden was seen as positive, since it was more active and gave a breath of fresh air, but many participants do not have a garden.

In summary, to renew our Action Program, to do "something," even if it is a mere distraction, helps avoid the "down feeling" of apathy and negativity.

Self-Discipline for What Goal?

Now let us turn to the question of "self-discipline" involving the creation of a new Action Program, that is, a type of action that one feels is **valuable, engaging, useful and self-fulfilling**. First, let us note that almost all of the actions listed above require little effort. In addition, they require no preparation! To flick on the Boob Tube with a single turn of the switch is the most universal example of obtaining an immediate reward (at the level of stimulus input) with no prior preparation or training! Other examples of getting a physiological reward, with no effort, in less than three seconds: smoking a cigarette or drinking alcohol.

A deeper sociological analysis of this situation is merited. Suffice it to say that certain industries are very happy that we are enslaved to these negative habits, and so are the sponsors of television programs. It might be hypothesized that a number of politicians find favourable this lack of social engagement and personal realization. People who do not act socially or think with critical competence are more easily led by clichés and dogmatism.

The ideals of self-realization, which are cultivated in Psychotherapy and Counseling Training groups, can lead us to other possibilities of personal growth. Thus, when the question is asked, "What would you **like** to do, if you had all your powers and capacities ready?", people are encouraged to reflect upon their habitual way of using their free time. When the question is asked in Biosystemic Training groups, here are some of the frequent answers:

1. Exercise
2. Study
3. Write in a personal diary
4. Practice a musical instrument
5. Paint, design or do sculpture
6. For several people, to write a professional article becomes their major goal for developing Self-Discipline.

In several Psychotherapy and Counsellor Training groups we explored these potential actions, defining the obstacles, and creating a method in which the Helper (whom I will call the Counsellor) can offer **a strategy for effective change**. In a nutshell: How to create self-discipline so that one can achieve one's goals of independent action in a field of special competence? (To jump ahead of our story, the Counsellor who becomes proficient in this method can help an adolescent develop positive study habits, a University student work on his thesis, an employed person look for a job, a so-called "lazy" sedentary person begin physical exercises, a confused person clarify ideas with a personal diary, and an ambitious professional begin article writing. Evidently, the possibilities are vast.)

Starting Out

Here are the steps for this "Action Method for Developing Self-Discipline."

The Counselor asks, during a face-to-face dialogue, the following questions:

Why?

1. What action do you want to develop?
2. What are your reasons that you want to develop this capacity? (the motivation)
3. If you were to develop this action, what would be the positive consequences (very much like the above question regarding "motivation," and reinforcing still further the positive significance of the project)

These questions are necessary because a person often starts out with notions that are too vague regarding his positive motivation.

When and Where?

4. If you had this capacity, when and where would you be practicing it?

This question can lead into a more profound inquiry into the Protagonist's so-called "use of free time." A person may need help to define the "when, where and how long" aspects of a project, before being able to really take it on. If a person's life of stress and obligations do not really permit taking time for the desired action, then it may be questioned whether this is the moment to take on the project. The reason is that the strategy for developing Self-Discipline, which will take time during one or several Counselling sessions, **must be immediately practiced in the real-life situation.** If the Protagonist does not see the realistic possibility for this practice (or has other psychological barriers against creating the place and time to actually put the action into practice), it may be advantageous to not initiate the project at that time.

The Superficial Obstacles

5. And why do you think you haven't been able to develop this capacity until now?

"I'm too lazy."

"I have no self-discipline."

"I have no energy when I come home."

"I don't know."

Some Schools of personal development will encourage the Protagonist to explore these "negative attitudes" during the talking phase of the face-to-face colloquia, but our "action strategy" will dissuade us from doing so. (Cristofori,1994) (We will describe our more interesting "depth approach," called the Psychodramatic Action approach, in a moment. And at that point we will understand why such verbalized responses, offered when the Protagonist is merely sitting in the chair and talking, may be considered "superficial.")

We will also see that negative ideas, like the above list of "superficial obstacles," that presumably "explain" **why** a person does not engage in a Self-Disciplined action, are like sawdust in the mind. They are not the "true reason" for the lack of the developed discipline. They fill in the gaps of thinking when we are first presented with the question, **"Why don't you do what you think you want to do?"** The "true reason", we will see, is more complex. **It is a combination of blocked emotion and blocked action,** as well as negative attitudes regarding the significance of the Action, lack of self-esteem, tendency toward mental distraction, confusion of priorities, and so on.

In a Training Group

7. Counsellor: "Can I show you the Psychodramatic Action approach that can help you unblock your capacity?" At this point the Counsellor begins to "put into action" the fundamental strategy for change. Explanations will accompany the demonstration. Sometimes the explanations will precede the demonstration, other times it will follow. Given the complexity of the process, and the fact that it requires that the Protagonist's active participation, it should be done in a room with a sufficient free space for movement, rather one that is cluttered with desks, chairs and furniture. (Liss,1998)

In addition, it may be advantageous to carry out this strategy in a **group setting.** (Although it can also be done in an individual session.) In a group setting, the onlookers can give attention to the Protagonist, assist his movements with their own Body Empathy movements (Stupiggia,1994) -- which always reinforces the Protagonist's spontaneous actions -- and show appreciation for the budding action. Finally, after seeing how the procedure works, group members in the Training Program can try out the strategy with one another, developing their capacities in terms of both sides of the question: The Counsellor-in-training

helps his Protagonist unblock his capacity for self-disciplined action, and then, with the change of roles, becomes the Protagonist himself and works on his own self-development.

I will now describe the essential strategy for the Psychodramatic Unblocking Strategy. Each Counsellor will use it with his own variations.

Where, When and What First Step?

The Counsellor asks the Protagonist at **what time of day** he would like to initiate his (self-disciplined) Action? (Always looking for a specific response.) And **what day of the week**? And **where is he** at that time of the day? In the kitchen? The living room? The bed room? In what position? Doing what? The Protagonist assumes the position he typically has – sitting at the table, stretched out on a sofa, lying down on the bed – when he first thinks, “Now it’s time for me to(do the particular action)... study, paint, run, write in my diary, etc.”

This step begins to create a “state-dependent memory” which favours the spontaneous reproduction of the memory in the real situation. (Rossi,)

Let’s use the example of **studying**: “I have to read a chapter from my book and write two pages of notes. I have to do it. But I also want to. But somehow, I never get around to it.”

Time, place and position for beginning: “I’m sitting at the kitchen table. It’s 7 PM. I have an hour before having to prepare dinner. Nobody around to distract me.”

Counsellor: “Now for the first step. Where do you have to go, in order to **prepare** your action? (Every complex action requires one or several acts of **preparation**. This, in itself, will often create a major obstacle.)

The Protagonist will often need help, at that point, to understand an essential process of mental reflection which is necessary for preparing an action: **To break down an action into a series of steps.** Otherwise, **“We’re looking at the top of the mountain. But we don’t see the pathway for the very first step!”**

Possible response: **I have to go to the living room.** That’s where I have my desk for studying. But I first have to clear off the desk. (It’s not the moment to organize the desk, another potential “distraction.” The clutter on the desk has to be just put aside.) **I also have to find the book I want to study.** And I have to find my notebook for making notes. (The Counsellor remembers all these points, because they must all be put into sequential action, using the step-by-step strategy. Once the steps are defined conceptually and, hopefully, with little loss of time or rhythm, then the “real work” begins.)

The Fundamental Unblocking Strategy

Each Step Can Be Blocked by an Emotion

The basic work of the Psychodramatic Action approach requires two procedures: **Unblocking a single step of action, and unblocking the emotion that is attached to it!** It is a step-wise procedure. It requires a good sense of timing, by both the Counsellor and the Protagonist. **Each step of the action, including each preparatory step, can be attached to negative emotions. And each negative emotion must become unblocked!** (Examples in a moment.)

This brings us to our new understanding of blocked action based on our neurophysiological map: The basal ganglia Action System is intimately connected with amygdala Emotions. They have reciprocal connections. (Rolls,1999) The “real work” of this entire strategy is to go back and forth between single action steps and those emotional blocks that are connected.

Furthermore, to take a single step can mean just that. For example, a single step from the kitchen table toward the desk in the living room can arouse strong emotions! In other words, the emotional obstacles may come up in those very first **preparatory steps**.

From Chair-to-Chair “Talking About It” to Psychodramatic “Living It Out”

Let’s take a step backwards, for the moment, to look at the entire situation. Psychological thinking, in the past, was based on the assumption that our action system was blocked by our emotional and motivational system. To unblock the emotions while you’re sitting on the chair, or lying on the couch, imagining (usually vaguely) the desired action (more often than not, having in mind just a single image, not an entire action sequence), was considered a valid and sufficient therapeutic procedure. Result? **It usually did not work!** Why not? The presumption was that the capacity for the desired action would suddenly leap forward, and you would go home and carry out the entire action procedure. More important, it was assumed that the emotions that were blocking the action were resolved by talking about them sitting on the chair. But neurophysiology, as well as real experience, both show that this is not the case! And that’s why the “talking about it” procedure usually failed.

The emotions that block the desired action arise during the performance of the action itself! That is because the emotions are tied up with the basal ganglia action system, and come up only while this sub-cortical system is being activated. Furthermore, each activating step can re-stimulate a **different** blocking emotion.

Jer: where to put this material, the next two paragraphs?)

Overcoming the Hurdles of “No Energy!”, “Feeling Empty”, “No Enthusiasm.”

The art of the work is also in the rhythm. It is best to avoid being caught up in a **prolonged** emotional analysis. Prolonged verbalization can interfere with the developing action rhythm. Why is that? Each performed action step stimulates adrenalin and, as neurophysiologist Henri Laborit pointed out, this stimulates further action. (Laborit,1969) This is the positive cycle we wish to arrive at: action that leads to further action!

But the first steps can be difficult, like a baby beginning to walk. And this analogy may not be far from the neuronal truth. As a baby begins any new action, like reaching out for a glass, the movement is **hesitant and vacillating**. (Tronick,2005) That is because multiple neuronal systems within the basal ganglia are being activated at the very same time. Only with repetition of the action, sometimes at first guided by the receptive parent, can the correct and specific action pattern be laid down. But once the basal ganglia memory of the habit is established, it becomes **very well remembered** for the future. (We never forget how to drive a car, nor play a C minor chord, nor bring a fork with food up to our mouth, once we have learned.) Thus stable memory traces are a part of the geniality of the basal ganglia action system that we are trying to develop within our project of Self-Discipline..

In addition, the “good feeling” that comes from positive action usually does **not** precede the action, nor even come on during the first three seconds. This explains the frequent dependence on alcohol, tobacco and other artificial stimulants that give an “immediate fix”. These compulsions arise at the moment that the person feels, “There is nothing to do.” Why is that? The image or thought of performing the Self-Disciplined action is not yet sufficiently powerful to create the neurophysiological desire. Thus the **thought** of the action comes to mind, but the **feeling of wanting** to accomplish the action will come up only after 45 seconds of actually performing the action. This initial feeling of “neutrality” or “emptiness” will often block the Protagonist from initiating the Self-Disciplined action in everyday life.

The Psychodramatic Action method faces this difficulty and offers a solution. By practicing the action in the Counselling session, the Protagonist raises his own adrenalin level (by stimulating the hypothalamus) and, at the same time, is “laying down neuronal tracks” for the

specific action program (based on the powerful basal ganglia memory system). As one Protagonist described this transition from blocked to liberated action: "Once I'm off the ground, I feel like I'm flying, taken by the wind." This means that the self-reinforcing and self-accelerating components of the Action System have been reached.

In summary, the Counsellor's skill in timing, giving accompanying gestures, showing a positive (and sometimes humorous) attitude, are absolutely necessary for this double unblocking – of action and emotion – in order that the learning of the Self-Discipline goes on in a progressive way.

Opening Pandora's Box

If it happens that the Protagonist touches **deep traumatic emotions** – and this is quite possible, given that we are working on very delicate terrain that has been encapsulated in the unconscious for many years -- then, of course, the therapeutic goal of the session must change and confront the trauma. The action unblocking strategy can be left for another session. This is because traumatic emotions take priority in personal development. Counsellor and Protagonist can wish it were otherwise, but experience shows that the amygdala force of trauma cannot be side-stepped, once it is strongly activated. (Van Kolk,)

Another possibility: To warn the Protagonist that such deep emotions can come up. And then ask which work has priority: the emotional work or the action work. If the response is the action work, then a joint effort can be made to recognize the blocking emotions that rise up on a verbal level, but not to "go into them." This can work sometimes. **But sometimes the spontaneous return of the traumatic memory is too forceful.** Another implication: We can sometimes use this "action strategy" to favour deep emotional work. The desired action can trigger off the trauma of the past, and serve as the entry point for deeper emotional elaboration.

From Repeated Action to Basal Ganglia Routines: "Once I Got to That Point, I Couldn't Resist Continuing"

Let us imagine that two or three phrases of emotional difficulty are expressed by the Protagonist each time the action gets blocked. At the moment the emotionally laden phrases are expressed and the feeling that blocks the action becomes partially discharged, the Protagonist may look, momentarily, at the Counsellor. This is looking for support. In any case the important point, in this strategy, is to return to the action sequence! How might this be done? Here is one method: Each time the Protagonist concludes his emotional phrases, the Counsellor, whose arm gesture has been accompanying the Protagonist's action (Body Empathy), merely continues to point in the direction of the action. There is an advantage in not saying anything. For example, even a simple phrase, such as, "Now you can go on," might be experienced as too intrusive, too authoritative. In addition, verbal language can interfere with the autonomous brain processes more than a pointing gesture. And what happens after the emotional discharge? Sometimes there is a pause. Sometimes there is an exchange of looks between Protagonist and Counsellor. In the best of cases, the Protagonist re-orientes himself and continues the action sequence.

During these preparatory steps, the emotional block can return a number of times. The same procedure is used, with patience and persistence, by the Protagonist with the help of the Counsellor.

When the "key action" (actually studying, playing the piano, painting, running, etc.) is finally reached, there may be new blocks that come up and stop the action. But, interestingly enough, once the initial moment of the "key action" is unblocked, the adrenalized action may take over and the person continues, at least for several minutes, almost forgetting the presence of the Counsellor. If this happens, it's smooth sailing ahead.

If there is sufficient time to repeat the entire action sequence a second time during the session, and if it is then practiced at home, then the new action of self-discipline may be really taking root.

An analogy: Imagine a road with a series of road blocks. The basal ganglia is like a road. One might even call it a superhighway. Its tracks carry very fast and complex actions.

Multiple Roadblocks

Let's return to the obstacles. Where do the interfering messages come from? From all parts of the brain. How is that possible? Let's see what the neurophysiological map shows us: The entry point of the basal ganglia, called the "striatum," receives input's from **multiple sources** – the amygdala, cingulate gyrus, frontal lobe, parietal lobe, posterior lobe, thalamus, etc. – and this means that the potential roadblocks can come from a great variety of sources. (Ochsney,) In other words, the roadblocks can be emotional, attitudinal, conceptual, perceptual, attentional, remembered, related to self-concepts, identity, and so on. (Examples below.)

Thus, we can see, from this protocol, that we are dealing with a new art for healing. **The healing is not just of emotions, but involves the action-emotional complex**, as well as many other psycho-neurophysiological processes.

Trust is needed between Protagonist and Counsellor. But also artistic-like competence, on the part of the Counsellor. For that reason this healing method, the Psychodramatic Action strategy, must be tried out, practiced, and then practiced again and again, by the Counsellor-in-Training. Each Protagonist will show different roadblocks, and surprises may come up that are not described in this article.

With time and practice, the Counsellor become an "expert" in this particular art, healing the wounds of the past as new capacities for disciplined action take root in the basal ganglia unconscious.

Some Examples

As they start out, the Protagonist takes up his "normal position" of sitting at the kitchen table. Counsellor: "Can you now make the very first movement?"

Many of the roadblocks will emerge with the very first step! Sometimes it is the second step. Sometimes several steps are accomplished, and then the block! Example: The Protagonist enters the room (in the Psychodrama), takes the book off the shelf, takes the writing pad, sits down, picks up the pen, opens to the chapter, and... boom! An explosion of emotion! Or else, as stated above, the roadblocks are encountered again and again during the preparatory action, step after step. It's a real adventure!

Emotional blocks that came up when developing the step-wise sequence for **studying**:

"I was never good at school." (general memory)

"I've never liked studying. I never did my homework until the last moment." (general memory)

"I won't understand the book!" (negative prophesy)

"Authors write stupid things!" (denigration of the task)

"I should put up water for the potatoes." (distracting obligation)

"I feel tired!" (emotional fatigue)

"My eyes feel like they're burning." (physical symptom)

"I don't know how to write a summary." (sense of incompetence)

"Who is making me do this? I don't like to be obedient!" (feeling of an oppressive authority)

"When I do something for myself, I think of my mother and feel guilty that I'm not doing something for her." (feeling of guilt for another)

"I'd rather read that other book on the shelf." (perceptual distraction)

"This isn't life! Life should be fun!" (attitudinal block)

I propose that this is a fascinating adventure. The Counsellor's silent and empathic attitude permits the Protagonist to say several phrases, if he so wishes. But there is a delicate rhythm. Can the Counsellor sense the "right moment" to *point*, as if to say, "Well, I understand... Can we now go on?" Of course, the Protagonist can easily get bogged down in the negative emotion. Then much depends on the Counsellor's intuition. As in all Good Listening, it's more important to maintain the positive rapport than "get the job done." Very often, it's the sense of humour (which is easier with a group) that helps overcome the hurdles.

And sometimes it's the traumatic memory that comes:

"I was humiliated in front of the class!"

"My brother was the smart one! He was the favourite in the family!"

"I'm a failure! I was always a failure! I can't hide it anymore!"

And that's what happens! We have opened the door to the unconscious. Perhaps the psychodramatic action strategy will work. Perhaps psychological trauma must be faced. And the self-discipline task can be left for a subsequent session. Whatever the result, we have a new and effective tool for both emotional work and the creation of an independent, self-realizing Self.

Here are some blocks that have come up when other self-discipline tasks have been faced:

Running in the park: (after putting on one's running shoes): ***"People are going to see me!"*** (This is especially frequent for people who are even slightly overweight or who feel their movements are clumsy.)

Writing in one's diary: ***"Someone may read it!"***

Painting: ***"I'm not Van Gogh!"***

Doing self-massage: ***"Somebody else is suffering because I'm not taking care of her!"***

Playing a musical instrument: ***"I don't want to do exercises! I want to play music!"***

Summary and Conclusion:

Every moment of life is precious. So sometimes we'd like to arrive at our deepest capacities by the shortest route. But there is a proverb: ***"The goal is in the going!"*** Developing our capacities, even in the first simple, primitive and rudimentary moments, can give us great joy.

Epilogue: An Ancestral View

Many people are incapable of independent action that require self-discipline because they have not been helped to overcome the first hurdles. In one group, a very talented and sensitive person showed that she needed "the helping hand of another person" in order to initiate almost any action requiring independence. That example made me reflect further upon this universal difficulty. I propose the following hypothesis:

While the human brain was developing, from about 300,000 years to the era of civilization, 10,000 years ago, the human being was living in a primitive tribe. Studies suggest that this

tribe often consisted of about 30 people. In the tribal situation, surrounded by natural forests, nobody was living in a box, isolated from others, as we tend to live now. (Whether we live alone or with our nuclear family.) Therefore, it was rare that an action was initiated and carried on without the participation of others. The brain was developed in a situation in which action was collective! Even if we were the one to initiate the action, others joined in immediately, whether it was for hunting, gathering berries, finding firewood, cooking, or making utensils. Therefore it is no wonder that people who have not had special help at an early age for initiating and sustaining independent action will find themselves lost in this new era of "independence." So they flick on the television.

We are searching for better solutions than that.