

## Adding meaning to life

Besides our five senses there is also the vestibular sense of gravity. The vestibular apparatus is “ the most precise and sensitive of all sense organs in the animal world “ ( Robbins 1977 ). Located in the inner ear the vestibular system detects every movement of the head. A stream of vestibular input to the brain is generated by just balancing the head against gravity. All kinds of movements will then alter this input. One consequence of this is that by moving the body one alters the state of the brain. The vestibular nuclei within the brain stem are closely connected to the reticular formation. The reticular formation is one of the oldest parts of the nervous system and it is very complex running fibres to and from every internal organ, sense organ, muscle and brain region. According to Scheibel and Scheibel ( 1960 ) the average reticular neuron is connected to about 40.000 cells within the cerebral cortex. Through the reticular formation and via the vestibular system the organism is prepared to deal with different sensations to be able to form adaptive responses. “ We can only know in the nervous system what we have known in behaviour first “ ( Jaynes 1976 ). In other words, the way we act mirrors how the nervous system works. In previous papers ( Skövde 2001, Tucson 2002 ) I have suggested that the gravitational force, by its way of acting on us, is of great importance for our physical and intellectual development. “ The force of gravity prevails continuously everywhere on this planet and is of prime importance in permitting the nervous system to perform all aspects of its function. As Stanley-Jones ( 1960 ) has pointed out, the sensory receptors of the vestibular apparatus in the inner ear responding to the force of gravity are non-adaptive and are the most important energy source for increased neuronal activity “ ( Hydén 1969 ). My experience from training children and youngsters with mainly concentration problems, using the method Education in Balance™ ( Skövde 2001 ), is that their ability to use their higher cognitive levels increases. They are gaining more insight and they are becoming more aware.

Working from the hypothesis that vestibular stimulation matters I have now worked together with some severely handicapped clients.

They have been doing almost the same programme as the uninjured clients have done. My experience so far is that their mental capabilities have developed more than their abilities to use their body. The results raises many questions but it also show that the way we use our body affects our ability to experience and to be aware. It will add meaning to life. In this paper I will present the training and the results. I propose that research toward a science of consciousness have to incorporate the body and I give strong support to Pettigrew's conclusion " Gravity may provide a new arena for the interaction of the physics and biology of consciousness "( Tucson 2004 ).

Mats Niklasson 2004