

## Elegant and Hasty

By Carme Timoneda-Gallart, PhD

Tommy, eight years old, performed poorly at school, though a psychologist deemed him gifted. Using metaphor, the educator helps Tommy find his own resources to control impulsive behavior:

*"Well, Tommy, now I'm going to ask to you some questions, Ok?". Tommy nodded, moving a little on his chair. "Tommy, which number is double 15?" Tommy said automatically, without thinking, "20". I said: "Tommy, sometimes, our brain receives a lot of lightning and it is so overwhelmed that it has to warn us. But how? Because it is our body's boss, sometimes it can cause headaches, make us answer a question without thinking." Tommy said: "Yes, my teacher is always complaining! Tommy you always answer without thinking. You must think and then answer!" He looked nervous.*

*Then, I said: "I'd like to tell you a story about two horses. Once upon a time there were two nice black horses. One, called 'Hasty', was always jumping and shouting. He seemed a very nervous horse and he would run and run without knowing where he went.*

*When his trainer ordered him to be still, or walk gracefully, he didn't obey, just jumped and ran.*

*The other horse was called "Elegant". He was very peaceful and quiet. He also liked to run, and sometimes he jumped the fence, but when his trainer ordered him to walk calmly and gracefully, he always did it.*

*Tommy, now we are going "to be Hasty" and to do things like him." Tommy and I stood up and jumped around the room. Tommy even crashed against the table and the door.*

*Then I said: "Tommy, look, now we are going to be Elegant". Suddenly, Tommy started walking calmly and gracefully. I congratulated him, saying he acted very much like Elegant. Tommy smiled.*

*"Tommy, now we're going to sit down and I'm going to ask you a question. But before answering the question, you will put your hand up. Then, I will ask you if you want to answer like Elegant or like Hasty. After choosing which one, you may answer the question. OK?" Tommy nodded, liking the new game. I asked: "Tommy, which number is double 15?" Tommy raised his arm, closed his lips firmly, and looked up. A few seconds later, he said that he'd like to answer like Hasty. I*

*nodded. He said: "Double 15... double 15... is 30!" I said: "Great job!" He smiled saying that he usually acted like Hasty but prefers Elegant."*

One of our first steps was constructed around the metaphor that the brain receives a lot of 'lightning' and is severely overwhelmed. We then use another metaphor as a control mechanism for the impulsive behavior (answering without thinking, a very common behavior in children with learning problems). This metaphor concludes with a seeming alternative: we ask the child to first choose which horse he would like to be and, only afterwards, answer the question. Having to make a choice in this fashion makes it impossible for him to continue to answer before thinking.

If child therapy is a work of art, then the educator's work has some secrets. The first is to establish an emotional connection between the child and the therapist. Although necessary, this rapport is often absent. A child may be short and naïve, but he is a person, and as such has an impressive array of resources. If the educator sees a child as short of material, the artist will lose the opportunity to effect a necessary change in the child's life.

The second secret is that children understand perfectly what they do but

not *why* and *how* to cope with their behavior. The artist, knowing the quality of the child's material, demonstrates to him the uses of different parts of the work of art that he is; then, s/he lets the child's imagination construct, patiently and naturally, a better emotional tool or a new mental procedure.

How many times do adults waste their energy telling the child why a behavior is inappropriate, then trying to convince him to behave in a more suitable manner? When they don't show the child a way to change, a wall of resistance is being erected.

Nowadays, Tommy can always play with *Elegant* or *Hasty*, riding them firmly and commandingly. He normally behaves like *Elegant* even when he professes to be riding *Hasty*.

Children have more imagination than there are stars in the sky. Metaphor allows them to discover a new world of emotions in which they feel secure and behave in new, exciting ways. Finally, the shape of the work of art that they are will be balanced, and precious.

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# CONTRIBUTOR OF NOTE

## Carme Timoneda, Ph.D.

Written by Teresa Garcia-Sanchez  
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Carme Timoneda, an amazing therapist, is especially well-known in Spain for her work with children. The following introduction to her case report demonstrates the beauty of her techniques and the degree to which her popular work uses Ericksonian approaches and techniques.

"Children's therapy is like a work of art where creation is the educator's hand and imagination of the child's material. Similar to the expansiveness of the universe, a child's imagination is unlimited; it is the therapist's job to take the children's hands and accompany them in their journey to a better, more peaceful life. Ericksonian techniques are the vehicle, the essential tools in this unique challenge."

Helping children with emotional and learning problems has been the focus of Timoneda's work for more than fourteen years; she found that Ericksonian techniques are not only a good fit for her work, but she describes them as essential for effective intervention. With a background in psychology and in education, she developed her professional approaches at the Fundació Carme Vidal Xifre de Neuropsicopedagogia located in Girona, Spain, the aim of which is to integrate assessment, research, and training in neuropsychology. The diagnostic intervention model practiced there, identified on their website as humanist and strategic, is fully congruent with Ericksonian philosophy and direction. Her teaching at the Erick-

son Institute of Madrid consistently receives excellent feedback, with practitioners noting that her strategies and metaphoric applications work not only for children, but equally well for a broader group of cases.

During the last six years, Carme has trained educators in schools across Spain focusing on how to elicit better engagement from teachers and trainers. Her work in various schools is the starting point of a new way of teaching and handling difficult students. She trains the teachers to listen and to consider the whole family as well as the context the child brings to the educational environment. These premises are the strategies of pacing and utilization that Dr. Erickson used with his patients.

Carme has conducted several studies, which are compiled in a book in English: *A Better Look at Intelligent Behavior: Cognition and Emotion* (2008, with Frederic Perez, Nova Publishers, New York).

Carme and I are the only Spanish persons who present internationally at Ericksonian Congresses, the European Society of Hypnosis, and the International Society of Hypnosis. It is an honor to recognize her and her work in the Erickson Foundation Newsletter. She is actualizing what my husband, Juan Colomer, wished after the first time I hypnotized him. As he was being re-oriented he opened his eyes and definitively said: "But... this is something which needs to be taught at school!"

So, thank you Carme!