

Mary Ann's Story

A Teacher Learns

by Mary Ann Moser

I am a teacher of young children and, as time passes, I see that this is no accident.

I've always been intrigued by how people learn and why it is more challenging for some, even when they test out as "average" or "above average" intelligence. I was a child who couldn't "get it" or, if I could, I couldn't retrieve it. As I have studied and observed myself and the children I work with, I have come to believe that we can do more to prepare children for a lifetime of learning.

As a child, and throughout much of my adult life, I lacked the confidence and was blocked emotionally. My reactions to challenging situations were either to withdraw or to have emotional outbursts. I was a people pleaser, not wanting to make waves. My thinking was disorganized and I couldn't retrieve the words or thought that translated to verbal or written communication. I mumbled hoping that people would think I had added to the conversation, not wanting them to comment on what I said so I wouldn't have to feel stupid. My greatest fear was that I lacked intelligence and the ability to be creative. When they rare person in my life, like a college English professor and drama coach, tried to encourage me, I couldn't hear it. Secretly, I held on to his words throughout my life.

I feared that something was wrong with me because I had no goals in my life. My life just happened to me and I had no trust that I would ever become anyone who amounted to much. The few intimate relationships I have had were painful and did not work. Much of my life was spent in fight or flight, readiness and reaction.

Luckily, I have been a survivor with a sense of humor, much curiosity and the drive to learn about myself so that I can better serve myself and others, My search lead me to the Tomatis work in 1993. I was encouraged to work with art materials, look at art, read poetry or just sit while I had on headsets attached to an electronic ear. I was listening to filtered Mozart and Gregorian Chants.

At first, the art materials were very intimidating to me. There was that old relentless voice saying, "You need talent to participate in art experiences." Gradually, as I allowed myself to explore with the art materials, I answered that critical voice, my own, "But I'm having so much fun!" I am now able to make art beside the children in my class. No longer is the gathering of materials and the encouraging of others the only option for me. I now realize, too, that writing is not only a challenge, but can be released and another door to creative expression.

I remember when I felt the miracle of Tomatis. I was in a cubicle doing an active listening exercise, hearing and feeding back what I heard, when suddenly I could hear from an ear that seemed to be on top of my head. I began crying. It was a peak experience. I heard my voice for the first time during that session. I didn't know that I had never heard my own voice.

Obviously, my daughter had not heard this new voice either. In a long distance phone conversation she asked, "Mom, what have you been doing? Your voice sounds different." Her question combined with my experience dispelled any skepticism I might have had.

If I had to say what I gained from Tomatis, it would be that I feel an increased sense of freedom, balance, aliveness, energy and trust in my life. Life is less frightening. My eyes and ears have opened to ll the beauty and support that has always been there. I can better acknowledge it and take it in. My life feels

more peaceful and I feel a part of the great mystery that is unfolding. The Tomatis program helped me to see myself as an intelligent and capable person. I am more willing to take risks that in the past would have been devastating and debilitating to me.

My dream is that this program can be made available to the many adults and children who've given up on their ability to learn and to live their lives fully and creatively.