
Foreword

I have taught, facilitated, and studied learning and education in public institutions for more than 30 years. I have known Rita Smilkstein for nearly 8 years. In my experience, I have not encountered a single concept or paradigm that has the potential to transform learning more than Dr. Rita Smilkstein's work on the natural human learning process. Whether it be as a teacher in training, a teacher in the "field," or a person interested in brain approaches to learning, this work, *We're Born to Learn: Using the Brain's Natural Learning Process to Create Today's Curriculum*, is a winner, a must read!

Rita has taken the very essence of what is important for you to know about brain research and classroom research and provided an easy-to-use template for helping your students learn. I say helping, because they do the learning. "We can't give them our dendrites!"

We're Born to Learn will entice you to shift your paradigm. Yes, it will provide the necessary tools to do what you know intuitively to be more appropriate. From my early days in Cleveland Public Schools to teaching in prisons and juvenile detention facilities to teaching at a college level at the University of Michigan–Flint to the present day at St. Clair County Community College, I have never found a theoretical construct that could be applied as easily and as simply as the natural human learning process. Many teachers, if not most, struggle continuously with several key questions: How do I help my students learn? When they are learning, can I accurately assess them? Will my job of teaching ever get easier?

If you are like me, and I consider myself to be fairly normal, you not only ask yourself these kinds of questions, you struggle with their answers. In attempting to use Rita's work in elementary classrooms, high schools, and now college, I can attest to the fact that the foundation of these ideas is solid, their use easily adaptable to any grade level, and the results absolutely amazing. You will see the results.

Consider Joy Middle School in Detroit, Michigan, which made some recent gigantic jumps in state standardized testing due in part to the natural human learning process (Contact: Mr. Larry Till). I currently teach "wannabes," teachers in training, as I like to call them affectionately. Many

are now doing their student teaching, and many have completed their degrees and certificates. A semester doesn't go by that I don't get a phone call from a former student thanking me for teaching them about the natural human learning process and its application to education.

We're Born to Learn is so reader-friendly. Rita cross-references her own work, pointing out which chapter you can resource as you move your way through the informative pages, charts, and graphs. I am honored to write this foreword for Dr. Smilkstein, as her work will undoubtedly gain continued support and accolades around the country and perhaps the world. Thank you, Rita, for bringing to the world the natural human learning process and for allowing those of us who work in education to facilitate our students' learning. Indeed, we can't give them our dendrites, but we can facilitate theirs!

—James H. Berry

St. Clair County Community College, Michigan