



# the Heart of the Matter

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# Education from the Heart, for the Heart

You may have seen the phrase “Education from the Heart for the Heart” as a tag line in some of Rainbow’s advertisements. This isn’t just a catchy phrase. Certainly, it speaks to the loving care that Rainbow teachers provide, but it means even more: Rainbow believes that we are at the forefront of a societal shift to a more heart-centered era.

Of course, new eras don’t happen overnight – they are shifts that start out slowly. Sociologists and spiritual leaders who agree that a shift to a heart-centered era is underway, also agree that it is arriving by a change in consciousness, one heart at a time. Consider Lao Tzu’s words:

If there is to be peace in the world,  
    There must be peace in the nations.  
If there is to be peace in the nations,  
    There must be peace in the cities.  
If there is to be peace in the cities,  
    There must be peace between neighbors.  
If there is to be peace between neighbors,  
    There must be peace in the home.  
If there is to be peace in the home,  
    There must be peace in the heart.

## A Return to the Heart

If we are to create a society that is peaceful, sustainable, and spiritually fulfilling, it is going to happen one heart at a time. At Rainbow, we believe we are helping to usher in a more heart-centered era by educating our children holistically. This issue of *Heart of the Matter* describes heart-centered education and explains what the term “heart-centered” really means.

When one is operating in a heart-centered manner, his/her heart, mind, and body are all in alignment.

This is referred to as coherence – when all systems (heart, brain, hormones, breathing, etc) line up. The word “coherence” is appropriate, for when we are coherent we can think most clearly, because our fight or flight mechanism is not in the way.

HeartMath is an institute that is on a mission to prove scientifically, through a new field called neuro-cardiology, the concrete truths behind what the natural healers, mystics, and great spiritual

teachers have always known about the heart/mind/body connection. HeartMath utilizes a number of tools to help people detect and, therefore, train themselves to gain a state of coherence.

Another concept that HeartMath has proven is the existence of energy fields. Everything living, including each human being, has an energy field that emanates from it. Like the Earth, we have magnetic poles, and our energy field radiates out from us in electro-magnetic loops that vortex at each pole. These loops of electromagnetic energy aren't just a concept. What we sometimes refer to as "vibes" are detected through

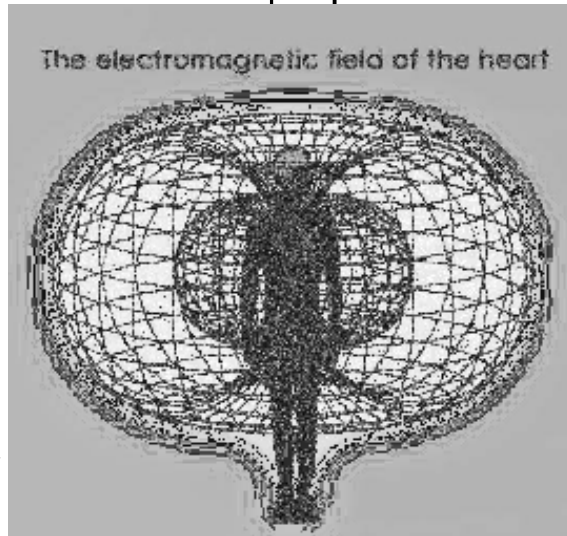
technological devices, and visible via computer monitors. Our "waves" affect others four to fifteen feet out, and our heart pattern shows up in another's brain when we shake hands. Where is the center of each person's energy field? One might imagine it would be the brain since the brain is considered to be the source of electromagnetic pulses that control our body. It is interesting that the brain is *not* our energy center. The center of our energy field is actually the *heart*.

This evidence precipitates a huge conceptual and spiritual paradigm shift. For hundreds of years, Western civilization has been operating under the assumption that the *brain* is the central command force of the human. However, this wasn't always the case.

### The Brain-Centered Era

Prior to the 1500's, humans lived through the magic of the soul. The spiritual world was a constant part of everyday life through myths, miracles and belief in magic. When Nikolas Copernicus proved that the Earth rotated around the sun, everything changed. Everyone could see that the sun "rose" in the East

every day, but now science was saying something different. Humans could no longer depend on their natural experiences to be True, so they began to rely on science for answers.



Eventually, during the age of the Enlightenment, rationality reigned supreme. As scientific thinking evolved, we made incredible advancements as a civilization in all areas of life – especially engineering and medicine. The anatomy of the human was explored, and it was determined that the brain was the center of human function. The brain sent out signals to the rest of the body, telling it what to do. After all, it was the human brain that set humans apart from animals--the ability to rationalize and to plan –

what we call "executive function." As a result, intelligence became highly valued – often above other virtuous traits.

**Simple Technique for Gaining Heart-Centered Coherence**

Think about something you are grateful for and totally bask in that feeling – use your imagination to stimulate all your senses. What does this person, place, or thing that you are grateful for look like? Imagine all the colors, textures, smells, any sounds associated with the person or thing, and of course, how the person or thing makes you feel. While you are enjoying this feeling, imagine your breath as coming in and out of your heart, filling your soul up to the brim, and all your good intentions radiating outward. Radiate Love.

Therefore, it was *science* that brought us into the epoch of the brain, otherwise known as the Enlightenment, which is where we've been ever since. Ironically, it is another *scientific* discovery that is transitioning us into the heart-centered era. We are learning that the heart, not the brain, is the command-center of the human. It provides the rhythm of the body, beating 100,000 times a day. All the blood of the body circulates through it at a rate of two gallons each minute, constantly sending out information, receiving, and synthesizing information from every area of the body. With every breath we take, we are sending oxygen

into the blood stream and along with it, messages to the heart about the environment. We also now know that the heart sends out a balancing hormone in the body. Most convincing is the finding that at least 65% of the neurons in the heart are the same type found in the brain, and the heart connects directly to the brain. The

heart and the brain continually send signals back and forth, as if in conversation. This helps explain the stories we have heard from heart surgery patients – such as where a recipient craved the favorite foods of the heart donor. Although the brain is still considered the center of “executive function,” new evidence continues to emerge pointing to the heart as the center of higher function. As Aristotle once put it: “The heart is the seat of the soul.”

**We are learning that the heart, not the brain, is the command center of the human.**

When the heart is in command, the *whole* person is coherent, but when the brain takes control, we actually become *less* functional. Why? Because the brain operates on emotional memory and gets “stuck” on old patterns. Dr. Douglas Gerwin, Co-director of the Research Institute for Waldorf Education, goes so far as to claim, “The brain can’t actually create new thoughts, only repeat, organize, and perfect them.” In other words, it is *from the heart* that ideas and inspiration spring forth. The heart takes in emotional, social, and spiritual information and guides the human wisely. The brain is, indeed, an amazing tool, but it functions best when it is *guided by the heart*.

The concept of our body being best guided by the wise heart is a metaphor for our civilization. Just as the brain has dominated the human for the last 400 or so years, so has human civilization dominated the Earth. For the past 400 to 600 years – during the era of the brain – we have paid a hefty price for our advancements in civilization. While rationality reigned supreme, it became “rational” to do things that, upon examination, went against the wisdom of the heart. I speak namely of the destruction of the planet for the pursuit of profit.

Looking back at the Middle Ages, I can appreciate how people were more

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spiritual and heart-based. Of course, we progressed for good reason – there was much misery, violence and suffering then – but was our

soul sacrificed when we became brain-dominant? I am certainly not proposing we regress, but that we evolve. Many people believe that a new era is dawning that combines the scientific knowledge we have gained with

a heart-centered approach. It is my belief that when we gain harmony with the heart, we will also gain harmony with all living

things. When we become coherent within our own individual selves, we will become coherent with all of life. It is my hope that we can establish this balance before we perish.

### Emergence into the Heart-Centered Era

This new era that I speak of – let’s call it the Heart-Centered Era – may sound idealistic, fantastical, or far-off, but it is evident in many strands of contemporary life. Concepts that were once considered marginal or radical are becoming mainstream – such as caring for the Earth through recycling and the local food movement. Yoga and meditation are becoming accepted even in conservative households. Alternative medicines, such as acupuncture, which taps into the energy systems of the body, are increasingly being covered by insurance companies and used by people who were previously skeptical.

On a spiritual level, a new cosmology is emerging that incorporates the evolution of time, and demonstrates the inherent oneness of all Creation. The dominance of the individual and individualism is being balanced by communal values. This is evident in the surge of interest in Buddhism, for example. As one Japanese Buddhist monk so eloquently put it, “The individual is an illusion. We are all connected to everything.”

### Heart-Centered Education

Consider the implications of the entrance into a heart-centered era on education. Our current educational system was developed at the height of the rational age.

It was almost solely created to impart knowledge to children. As the world has sped up and become more complex, our educational system has lagged. Proponents of conventional

education are using political devices to ramp up the brain-centered approach with high stakes testing. But it isn’t working. Kids are no longer able to endure sitting and using their brains all day without engaging their

body and spirit. This system has developed a multitude of pathologies – some of which have names, but all of which point to a disease of the human spirit.

***A school whose curriculum is informed by the heart, looks, feels, and acts entirely differently than conventional, brain-centered education.*** Heart-centered education has entirely different core values. Most importantly, cooperation, not competition, is the underlying cultural component in a heart-centered school. Children work together and see each other as part of a whole.

In a heart-centered school nature is alive. A tree, for instance, is not just a biological object with a Latin name, engaging in the process of photosynthesis. It has a living soul. It communicates with the human spirit every time we exchange air through inhaling and exhaling. A tree is not just a wooden material to be processed and bought and sold for profit; it has beauty and wisdom. It participates in the cycles of life and is to be contemplated.

In a heart-centered school, there is also much to learn from other cultures – past and present. Students participate in various ceremonies, celebrations and rituals from a variety of cultures to recognize the cycles of life. In particular, tribal people – remnants of the pre-Enlightenment past -- have much to offer. In a sense, children are indigenous, so they easily relate to tribal cultures, along with all things mystical. Up until the time they start to read, children naturally see the soul-world and don't separate the magical from the factual. (Remember when you were a child, how difficult it was to know if a dream had really happened?) Therefore, in a heart-centered school children's connection to the spirit world is kept alive. Dreams, fairy tales and mythology are meaningful.

Today, IQ may still be considered the measurement of raw, rote intelligence, but study after study has proven that social and emotional intelligence are better indicators of success and happiness in life. In a heart-centered school, imagination, creativity, and intuition – all of which come partially from outside the brain – are considered vital for informing students. A truly

heart-centered school is naturally holistic. Multiple intelligences are recognized and strengthened. Thoughts and feelings are considered to be real, even if they can't be proven empirically or seen visually. The arts are integrated and essential to all types of learning. Finally, in a heart-centered school, silence is treasured. Not the kind that results from rigid control, but the type of silence that comes from contemplation.

**Rainbow Mountain Children's School** has operated with these tenets for decades. We were at the forefront of holistic, heart-centered education when we opened in 1977. Early on, Rainbow

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understood that if you want a child to be able to think better, you have to do more than impart knowledge and focus on cognitive skills. By focusing on the whole child, students become smarter. Rainbow

helps students increase their IQ's, their motivation to learn, and their ability to perform in high school. Our outstanding Stanford Achievement scores prove it, as well as the success of Rainbow graduates in high school and later in life. Better yet, we are preparing them for *life*. Rainbow students have the opportunity to become healthy, happy, high-functioning people, ready to make a positive difference in the world, one heart at a time.

**Resources:**

- <http://www.heartmath.org/>
- Anthony Kuhn. *Monk's enlightenment Begins With A Marathon Walk*, <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=125223168&ps=rs>
- Malcolm Gladwell. *Blink*
- Daniel Goleman. *Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More than IQ*
- Margaret Heath. *Heart Centeredness Lecture at the Vesica Institute, April 16, 2000*
- Rudolf Steiner. *Knowledge of the Higher Worlds and Its Attainment.*