

“The more number and finger games a person does in preschool, the better he or she will be in mathematics at the age of 20.

If you want good IT specialists, you must not give them a laptop in childhood, but finger games instead.”

Prof. Dr. Manfred Spitzer, neuroscientist

Digital Dementia

doa. The neuroscientist Dr. Manfred Spitzer came to the conclusion through his studies that education is the most important health factor for the prevention of dementia in old age. Using all the senses in children’s learning appeals to many areas in the brain, which in turn leads to a densification of the fine brain structure. The more brain structure built up in early childhood, the longer is the descent into noticeable dementia, which has started earlier and earlier in recent years. For this reason, Prof. Spitzer warns against using digital media for learning in kindergarten and elementary school; as this leaves large areas of the brain unused because the learning level is limited to swiping and typing. He speaks about “digital dementia”. Since his findings encounter strong resistance, the question arises whether our children should be consciously led into “digital dementia”. [6]

“There is no data whatsoever that shows anyone getting smarter on the computer.”

Prof. Dr. Manfred Spitzer, neuroscientist

Education through talking and comprehension?

doa. To make childhood possible, one needs a lot of rest and much time for guiding, accompanying, practicing and making decisions for the children. According to the youth psychiatrist Winterhoff, in the mid-1990s adults became absorbed in digitization and forgot about childhood in the process. The statement of the child and youth psychiatrist gets to the heart of the matter: “We have turned the children into little adults, because the idea prevails that one could educate by talking and making them understand.” But what impacts does this have?

- In the case of obstacles, there is either a fundamental refusal or “overambitious working attitude“.
- In the social field, it is often the children who decide.
- In conflicts they never see realistic self-contributions. Other people or circumstances are always to blame.
- The child does not accept a compromise settlement.
- In life, the lust and mood principle prevails.

Winterhoff: “We adults have failed to demand and practice [emotional/social] psychic functions from these persons in childhood. That’s why they don’t have them. [...] We have more and more children and adolescents who have the maturity of toddlers.” [7]

“If children cannot develop emotionally and socially, they remain at the level of infants and our society is then in danger.”

Doctor of Medicine, Michael Winterhoff, child and youth psychiatrist

Do children really need to be prepared for the digital age?

mak. Winterhoff’s position on this is clear: no child needs to be prepared for the future, because that is not possible. If we gave our children a comparable psyche that we ‘still’ have, they would be able to cope with everything as adults. Digitalization is a technology and nothing more! If we manage to deal with this technology in such a way that we have more time for ourselves and our children, then we have won. The youth psychiatrist therefore advises adults to regularly take care of their emotional and social psyche. It must have a chance to regenerate, regeneration by sleep is not enough. We must be in nature and in the

forest, seeking silence, to ground ourselves. This way we have a healthy psyche and intuition, and we are clear and distinct.

Winterhoff’s appeal to parents: “Make sure you get time off, take care of your grounding, make sure that you have a feeling for your children. It is not the device that determines them, but free yourself from the slavery of digitalization! [...] Do with the children what you have experienced yourself: nature, forest, hiking, even if the child does not feel like it at first. Take a holiday with nobody having a mobile phone.” That sounds like a real preparation for life, doesn’t it? [9]

Switching off the GPS system keeps the brain going

doa. A study on London taxi drivers showed that those brain areas that are assigned to orientation are much more developed in them compared to other people. The brain area was also well developed in those who completed this training and passed the license exam. The conclusion of Eleanor Maguire, Professor of Neuroscience and author of this study: “The human brain remains ‘plastic’ even in adult life, allowing it to adapt when we learn new tasks.” To this Prof. Spitzer concluded in his lecture *Digital Dementia*: “If we no longer use the brain’s own navigation system because we have it in the car (GPS), then we let it navigate at the expense of our own ability to orientate.” We should also let our children develop this ability optimally by letting them tell us which way to go next when driving. [8]

Closing Point •

Professor Spitzer:

“When people know what is good and bad, they are usually able to decide for themselves what is good for them.

But as long as we primarily hear how great the smartphone is and that there are no problems with it, we cannot make rational and responsible decisions.”

This is why his concern is to educate the public!

The Editors (ncm.)

Sources: [6] www.youtube.com/watch?v=FnDEF7Aw9HI (ab 1:42:14) | Book „Digitale Demenz: Wie wir uns und unsere Kinder um den Verstand bringen“ (How we lose our and our children’s minds) Droemer Knauer (publisher) [7] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zzLM3CrYm0> (ab Min. 39)

[8] <https://www.wired.com/2011/12/london-taxi-driver-memory/> | <https://www.livescience.com/17376-london-taxi-drivers-brain.html> | <https://news.yahoo.com/cabbies-brains-more-navigation-gray-matter-170903561.html> [9] *How digitalization stultifies our children – psychiatrist speaking clear language!* (in German, ab Min. 77): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zzLM3CrYm0>

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