

## **It's Not Just Basket Weaving**

### **Understanding the use of practical learning at Falcons Learning.**

Many learners at Falcons Learning have been subject to traumatic experiences during their childhood.

These can manifest in 'challenging behaviour' when being taught in a mainstream setting and this can preclude some learners from those settings.

Historically it was seen that those less academic would be able to take a vocational route. It seemed that children that were 'good with their hands' were 'not so bright'. However, more recent work in the field of trauma and learning methods would tend to suggest that there is a real positive to manual work for traumatised young people.

When the young person is in a state of crisis the body responds by adrenalising and then secreting the hormone cortisol into the system. This makes it very difficult for the person to carry out anything that requires fine motor skills. Therefore, when a person is focussed on using their fine motor skills in an arena that is non-challenging they are able to regulate effectively. This can be almost a reversal of the stress reactions. Indeed, whilst discussing something very sensitive and emotional learners are offered the chance to play with Lego.

The offer of a variety of activities which require fine motor skills and dexterity can be highly beneficial in helping to resolve these stressful and challenging episodes for the learners. The practical application of maths and English skills in workshop environments tends to ensure that at the same time the students are learning about angles (for example) they are using tools which require fine motor skills, in turn this will prevent them embarking on a fight, flight, freeze or flock response.

This response may have been seen, in other settings, to be simply bad behaviour. Falcons Learning recognises the need to prevent students entering a crisis and we look to remove causes of anxiety wherever possible. This has resulted in a different assessment strategy and a choice of accreditation provider that requires less in the way of written exams and more in the way of practical demonstrations of competence.

For some young people the traditional concept and constructs of school have been a source of anxiety and created a barrier to their Learning. Falcons Learning designs its offer to look and feel different to other schools.

**Falcons Learning aims to meet the need of the learner – not the layman's perception of a school.**



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For more information in relation to trauma and its impact on learners please read:

- Van Der Kolk, B. (2014). *The Body Keeps the Score*. London: Penguin.
- Burnell, A., & Archer, C. (2003). *Setting up the Loom: Attachment Theory Revisited*. In *Trauma, Attachment and Family Permanence* (pp. 62-77). London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.
- Balbernie, R. (2001). *Circuits and Circumstance: The Neurological Consequences of Early Relationship Experiences and How They Shape*. *Journal of Psychotherapy*, 237-255.
- Allen, M. (2008). *Attachment, Developmental Trauma and Executive Functioning Difficulties In the School Setting*. London: Family Futures