

[www.coolcatteacher.com/e80](http://www.coolcatteacher.com/e80)

[Recording starts 0:00:00]

To celebrate the end of the first season of the Ten Minute Teacher Podcast on June 16<sup>th</sup>, we're running a giveaway. The Dash and Dot robot wonder pack from Wonder Workshop Stay tuned at the end of the show for how to enter.

As we finish up the school year, I have two quick reminders for you. Number one, don't let people who throw rocks keep you from being a teacher who rocks. And number two, don't let new ideas overwhelm you. Sometimes I feel like a donkey in a Kentucky derby. But it isn't about how fast you or I go, my friends, but are we making forward progress. Thank you for making the 10 Minute Teacher podcast part of your forward progress. Now, on with the show

*The Ten-minute Teacher podcast with Vicki Davis. Every week day you'll learn powerful practical ways to be a more remarkable teacher today.*

VICKI: Today we're talking to Ramona Persaud, [@ramonap](https://twitter.com/ramonap) producer and director of the documentary, Grey Matters. <http://www.greymattersdocumentary.com/> Now, Ramona, in your documentary you really take a look at how we need to adjust teaching to how the brain learns. So today we're going to talk about five ways to adjust our teacher to how the brain learns. And if teachers want to know more about this, they can take a look at your documentary, Grey Matters. So Ramona, thanks for coming on the show and what is your first way we can adjust?

RAMONA: Vicki, than you so much for having me. I think the first thing teachers need to realize is if a brain is stress the brain isn't learning. So if you have a kids that's come into class who had an argument with his mom or missed a meal or didn't finish his homework, or you can insert whatever potential stress that could have occurred in many of our student's lives, they have very complicated lives.

[00:02:00]

So they show up to class and you go, "Okay, great, we're here. We're going to do erosion, we're going to math" except your students may physically be in your classroom but they're not focused on what you're doing. And as a teacher, it's important to kind of realize and go, "Something is going on with this particular kid and I need to figure out how to get them back to the classroom.

VICKI: That is so true. They come into my classroom already on the ledge ready to jump. And you can't teacher a jumper, you have to get a jumper to step back from the ledge.

RAMONA: Absolutely.

VICKI: What's your second one?

RAMONA: The second one would be realize that the brain is a patterning organ. And so when you're teaching something new for example, you need to find something that that student already know so they can map it on to it. So if you were to meet someone new and you were explaining something you would say, "Oh, it's kind alike." So you're trying to find something they know already. So in teaching terminology it's sort of mapping the new knowledge to the known knowledge. And you'd see this a lot, you have a kid from a different culture and you're saying – how do I explain this American holiday, for example?

You dig down to kind of go where is that similarity, that connection that the student is going to make?

VICKI: Absolutely. I had a professor in college, Dr. Adler, who called it the information conversation process. And he says you don't just take information – it's not attached to everything else. You collapse it on everything you already know. So we do have to relate it, don't we?

RAMONA: Yes. It's the only way it's going to stick. And once you kind of help the student make that connection, it resonates with them and they will recall it better because they'd think, "Oh, it's kind of like when Miss. Davis said..." And so they have this thing to map it to because they have a situation and a circumstance or some broader context to fill that information into.

[00:04:00]

VICKI: So we don't want the brain stressed, we want to understand that the brain likes patters, what's our third?

RAMONA: Third one is to realize that our brain is changing. I think when I was a kid, and certainly lots of teachers said the same thing which was, you use 10% of your brain. And I always thought, really, because there's a whole 90%, what do we do with it, then? And the reality is our brain is changing. So as we continue to learn, we make new connections, we are consistently changing – I'm changing my brain right now, I'm doing something new.

So it's important for a teacher because I think if you have a kid who struggles in your class, the thing is, that kid has failed more tests than they have passed. And it's tough for them to realize, I can change this outcome. One of the kids I worked with in the film was a high school senior and at the beginning of the year she says, "I hate school, learning is not for me, I don't know what I'm going to do, maybe I'll go in the army. I just don't know, learning is not for me." And she repeated this. And the problem was she was a [poor tester] and she had some challenges.

But by working with the teacher, [Jeremy Matler], but the end of that school year she had made honor roll twice. And that is mind-blowing. She had no idea she could do that.

VICKI: So you mean growth mindset? Is that what you're meaning by brain changing?

RAMONA: Basically, as you're learning information, you're literally creating nuance and dendrites. Anything that you learn is going to re-wire your brain. The problem with the struggling student is you have to overcome this idea of no matter what I do I'm going to fail. But if a teacher can recognize that, "Oh I see you're struggling. How do I help you find a difference way?" So then you go back to the patterning. Okay, well, we need to find some different patterns. Okay let's remember our brain is changing, we can change our brains.

**[00:06:00]**

So remind that student that nothing is set in stone. Yes, you're not getting it now but let's try these different things to help you get it. And it's kind of a bob and weave situation for teachers because – okay, you're not getting it, you get it, you're not getting. You know what I mean? So you have a classroom of students with different abilities and how do you meet them all where they are?

VICKI: That's a challenge. Okay, what's our fourth?

RAMONA: Your fourth one is this idea of repetition and teaching for mastery. A lot of folks will talk about this rote learning and "oh, we don't need to have rote learning." Except, you need to have a lot different ways to practice new material which is where mastery comes. And the key is to not have it feel like repetition. So here you are, 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, you are learning fractions. Okay, here are the basics of fractions, we're going to try it with geometry, we're going to use it with measurements. And you go through all of these different ways where as you're still teaching the same foundational concept but you're doing it in different ways.

VICKI: So it's really that we do need repetition, we just don't need monotony in repetition, we need to repeat in a variety of ways.

RAMONA: Exactly.

VICKI: What's our fifth, Ramona?

RAMONA: And so your fifth way is to look at the ways in which we assess. So we all have to have ways to check and see are students getting it? It doesn't just have to be the one single test. It doesn't just have to be the ABC or D. maybe you can do a project in a classroom, maybe you can do a portfolio. The more the kids have some choice in this, the more engaged they are.

**[00:08:00]**

So to go back to the assessment piece – assessment is extremely important and we do need to know that they're getting it but let's not make it only a test. Let's find different ways to do it, let's make a game out of it, let's do a play in history. History is very open to plays for an example. Let's get them out moving if it's geography type – but let's find different ways to have them show that they have learnt the materials.

VICKI: Well, teachers, it's really an exciting day because all of the neuroscience that's really studying how students learn. And yes, there's so many things we already understand as teachers but I think there's some important pieces that we have to remember here that Ramona shared, if we're going to be that remarkable teacher we all want to be, that the brain does get stressed and we have to be careful about it, that the brain is a pattern organ and it needs those relationships, that the brain is constantly changing. But our students also have to understand that their brain can change and be open to learning, that we have to repeat without being monotonous and we have to assess in a variety of ways.

You know, remarkable teachers, this is just great teaching. The documentary is Grey Matters. And Ramona, thank you for being on the show.

RAMONA: Thank you so much for having me, Vicki.

VICKI: On June 16<sup>th</sup> we'll finish up Season 1 of the 10 Minute Teacher. So celebrate, we've partnered with one of my favorite robots for teaching coding, Dash and Dot form Wonder Workshop. Go to [coolcatteacher.com/wonder](http://coolcatteacher.com/wonder) and enter to win your very own Wonder pack form Wonder workshop and to learn more about how you can use Dash and Dot to teach programming to kids, aged, kindergarten and up.

*Thank you for listening to the Ten-minute Teacher Podcast. You can download the show notes and see the archive at [coolcatteacher.com/podcast](http://coolcatteacher.com/podcast). Never stop learning.*

[End of Audio 0:09:59]

*[Transcription created by [tranzify.com](http://tranzify.com). Some additional editing has been done to add grammatical, spelling, and punctuation errors. Every attempt has been made to correct spelling. For permissions, please email [lisa@coolcatteacher.com](mailto:lisa@coolcatteacher.com)]*