

## How MNRI® Found Me

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**M**y personal journey with MNRI® started about five years ago. After self diagnosing my 4 year old daughter, C, with Selective Mutism (SM) and a possible sensory processing disorder, I spent five months searching high and low for a professional that could understand SM and would treat her sensory issues as well. I finally found Héloïse Allard, a wonderful occupational therapist located just an hour and a half away from home. She was not a specialist in SM, but her style of work and personality was perfect for my little C. After an evaluation session with Héloïse, I heard a few laughs from my daughter in her presence. C was jumping, running around, and having fun during her evaluation! Clearly, my daughter felt comfortable at that point and even the evaluation had already changed her from the 'frozen' child I knew (not being able to move a muscle in social settings, staring at the floor, and rolling her tongue in every direction) to this.



Marie-France Renaud

The following week, we went back to visit our OT, Héloïse, to get the evaluation results. When we entered the small waiting room crowded with other parents and kids with challenges, the secretary greeted C and tried to engage her in conversation but it was too much for her. She was already velcrowed to my leg as I attempted to manage an office crisis through a cell phone conversation.

When Héloïse, with her radiant smile and gentle enthusiasm, came in to greet C, she was reluctant and yet eager to go 'play' again. Héloïse addressed me right there, saying, "I just am back from a class this weekend, is it OK for me to try some techniques with C?" She took her by hand to a room on the other side of the corridor to work with her. I was still talking on my phone, busy with my office crisis, and didn't realize that this was the first time I ever left my daughter out of my sight with an adult she hardly knew.

Ten minutes later, my previously little frozen daughter opened the door all bubbly, speaking, and bouncy – skipping in front of me, the other kids, parents, and staff. She was jumping, she was loud, she was smiling and she was SPEAKING in front of other people. My surprise was huge. "What is this?" I said. I went into the room where C and her specialist had spent the last ten minutes and asked her to explain what she did for C. She explained that she did a reflex integration exercise and showed it on me, pressing inside my hand on extended arm. She handled me the book on MNRI® and I saw that this was an exercise for Hands Supporting. This was my first contact with MNRI®.

I was in shock! My eyes filled with tears as my daughter was now completely alive for the first time in front of other kids and adults. WOW! I had so many emotions running through all my heart at that very moment. My mind was trying to grasp, intellectually, the miracle that had just happened. My soul was jumping to the

clouds with absolute joy. At the same time my stomach squeezed as I felt so guilty that, I as a therapist, could not achieve the same result that was achieved in ten minutes by another therapist.

I held 'the book' and I sat in silence in the therapy room for next two hours while C had a fantastic regular OT treatment and I read this book, trying to very quickly absorb the text. The book was called, *MNRI®: Masgutova Neurosensorimotor Reflex Integration, Dynamic and Postural Reflexes*.

As an ex-Police Instructor and Communication Consultant for the Quebec Police Academy, I was fascinated with how the 'fight or flight' response influenced communication strategies, specifically the choice of using force by experienced officers. They often seemed to repeat the same poor methods in intervention. I always tried to help them to understand what was really motivating them to act or react beyond the symptom in another more strategic way. I often thought they did not have the appropriate response to a specific situation and tried my best to train them to change to a more analytical response. When I read about reflexes, I understood then, that this reality transcended their culture, their excellent education, and repetitive training (with professional actors), their personality, and especially their own INTENTION. It was something the vast majority of them could not control; this invisible reality was controlling them.

Even by just reading the title of this book, I was sold. That's it! The reflexes! The neuro-physiological part of the communication phenomenon IS the bottom of the proverbial iceberg. As I was reading, I realized right there that what I was holding in my hand was 'the missing link' I had been seeking for, as a police trainer. It's all about survival. I realized the potential of MNRI® for victims of trauma because, not only was I holding the key of knowledge and understanding, I was holding the key to repattern the reflexes. To INTEGRATE them? How is this possible?

As my eyes were mesmerized and travelling between the book and my then speaking daughter, I still could not figure out how and why Héloïse's MNRI® intervention had resulted in her speaking in just 10 minutes. I left that session with a new mission, a new vision, and the beginning of a new comprehension. My whole world just shifted right then and there. It was the birth of my MNRI® journey. My new life mission became to understand the scientific miracle I had just witnessed and share it with whom ever would listen.

### *How MNRI® Found My Body, Mind, Heart, and Soul*

A week or two later, I entered my first MNRI® course in Montreal and encountered one of the most amazing beings I have ever met in my life – Christine Poulin. She was the MNRI® Instructor and welcomed me with strength and grace. I tried my best during these following four days (sitting in the first row right in front of her) to sponge up the information my Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) brain could retain so that I could understand why my daughter expressed herself with such joy in front of strangers after just ten short minutes of MNRI®.

The longer I sat there, the more questions that came to my mind. A lot of information, new concepts, and the reflexes were such a novelty! New terms were 'sensory stimulation', 'neurological pathway', 'circuit of response', the 'TLR', 'STNR', 'Babinski', 'Babkin Palmomental', 'The Foot Tendon Guard', 'Moro,' and 'Fear Paralysis'.

The Fear Paralysis Reflex attracted my interest, especially as this was an explanation for the freezing and dissociation response in children with SM. Being the last resort for survival and protection when the fight or flight response becomes impossible, it brings survival in making my child freeze, even when there is clearly nothing to fear. This reflex, programmed in our phylogenetic memory, is surviving actually in two specific situations: when we drown and when we are surviving in extreme cold weather. When we are drowning, the respiratory system shuts down, the vocal cords stretches for a last attempt to scream and seek attention, then the mouth closes, the throat closes, and the sinuses, too. Our blood travels to our brain, lungs, and heart to deliver its last oxygen reserve until being rescued or die. That is the FREEZING response. Freezing was the response my little C had around people other than her immediate family and she was showing this in a completely safe surrounding, which meant that the perception in her subconscious mind of the situation was extremely stressful, though she communicated with joy and happiness when interpreting the social context or people



Communication with joy and happiness starts with an integrated Babkin Palmomental: ☺=sensory stimulus for Babkin.

as secure and safe. It's her freezing response that has been rescuing her all this time, and the moment it was addressed and worked out in play and with a new technique, its overprotective state changed!

At that first MNRI® introductory course, I learned more about my daughter than I thought possible. I learned how her sensory hypersensitivity could, in itself, trigger the freezing response causing her body to paralyze in social settings. It wasn't the social setting itself, it was her sensory system interpreting the environment as too loud, too bright, too crowded, too tactile, too strong smelling, or just too much sensory information which caused her body to crash under this overload of stimuli.

I remember listening to Christine, our MNRI® Instructor, with my sunglasses on, sitting in front to avoid distractions, being annoyed by the computer fan and the person breathing five rows behind me. My brain hurt from the daylight and that was perfectly normal for me, thus the sunglasses. I remember realizing right there that even after reading the book, *The Out of Sync Child* by Carol Stock Kranowitz, it never occurred to me that I could have this sensory hypersensitivity as well. I thought everybody perceived the world like this.

I then realized I was far from being 'normal' or 'typical'. I had suffered from ADD all my life but refused to take medication for it. I managed in school, though I don't know how. My thirst for learning and curiosity always overshadowed my learning challenges. As I raised my hand for the twentieth time, I gathered my courage and asked, "Is there any link between ADD and the freezing response?" The instructor explained that when the reflexes are not integrated, the dominant survival response will take over, it can be fight, it can be flight and freezing and added that, "ADD is often a combination of the flight and freezing responses acting at the same time". Here I was completely lost, "Oh my God, how can I understand this?" Fortunately, it was time for her to demonstrate Babinski pattering and she offered to demonstrate it with me on the table. She said this would help my daughter a lot. After getting the sensory stimulation on my right foot, I felt that my vision and my auditory system were affected. It felt like the eternal cloud around my head was slightly clearing up. I was awakening right in front of my own internal 'eyes.' Meanwhile, the other people there just stared at my feet while all the changes were happening inside my body and brain.

This was the moment when I really started understanding that a sensory stimulus was an awakening of the reflex pattern, its sensory circuit, and how powerful MNRI® and reflex integration was. I left this class in absolute awe! While my body felt physical chaos from trying to respond to the stimulus, my mind was trying to think of which exercises to choose for myself to support my own developmental needs. I had a million more questions. I was determined to work with my daughter with all I learned at the course. I called Héloïse's superior at that time, Kathleen Sirard, and asked her if she would work with me, an adult who needed MNRI®, also. After some time and discussion, she agreed.



Babinski Reflex  
sensory stimulation

That was September 10, 2009. In December of that same year, my daughter was able to express herself with her teacher, some of her peers, to eat and go to bathroom at school. She participated for the first time at the school Christmas presentation in front of several hundred people. At the end of presentation instead of usual kids' question, "Did you see me?" she asked, "Did you HEAR me, Mom?"

This is how I found MNRI® and MNRI® found me. Kathleen worked with me, an adult, and this is how my journey of healing with MNRI® continued.

### *On Our Way to Inner Peace*

While other SM kids and families were struggling, we are doing better. My daughter still demonstrates freezing responses from time to time in social situations when people speak a different language – it's not perfect but she is usually communicating normally at school and many other places. We continue to work on her focus, concentration, fine motor coordination, and memory organization. She is growing into a joyful child, full of curiosity and talents, maturing emotionally, and is loving and lovable.

C already knows that when she grows up, she wants to be an MNRI® Core Specialist. She is determined to share the gift that gave her the freedom to express herself and contribute to her various social spheres and say, "I AM". She looks forward to every MNRI® conference as they give her quantum leaps to facilitate inner peace, academic performance, kinesthetic freedom for movement, and postural control.

## REFLEXES OF THE BRAIN

On my end, I have been pursuing that mission ever since I was struck by the MNRI® lightening bolt – the first time I laid eyes on the MNRI® book. My on-going personal healing story and plans to open MNRI® to the world of first responders, military, police, and firefighters will be available via my website echomotion.ca. Please check this website and enlighten me with your ideas.

MNRI® is one of the most enlightening gifts I have received. It's now time to share it infinitely.



*Thank you Dr. Masgutova for contributing to the butterfly evolution of my angel, for showing me my pathway to freedom from PTSD, sensory processing issues and ADD; a syndrome you call "reflex integration disorder" via your deep knowledge, love, dedicated life mission, and wisdom! – Marie-France Renaud*