

'Gymathtics' combines math and exercise to stretch kids' bodies, minds

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By Sherry Robinson, Times Staff Writer In Print: Saturday, February 28, 2009

Carrie Scheiner puts kids through the paces with Gymathtics, which combines math and exercise to stretch both bodies and minds.

When her son reached the age of 7, Carrie Scheiner noticed that, like lots of other boys his age, he would rather sit in front of a game system or computer instead of being up and active. So the Tampa resident started thinking about how she could combine movement with learning — and still make it fun. That's when she came up with *Exploracise Gymathtics*, a DVD that gets kids moving while they learn.

According to the Centers for Disease Control, obesity more than doubled in the past 20 years among children ages 6 to 11, going from 6.5 percent in 1980 to 17 percent in 2006. Statistics show that seven out of 10 overweight adolescents will become overweight adults.

A former educator who is now a stay-at-home mom, Scheiner says that she has always been passionate about helping children learn and love math.

Scheiner says the math isn't so challenging that it will put off younger kids or so easy that older children won't want to participate. She decided that the 30-minute video had to have something for her 5- to 11-year-old target audience to work. "Parents, like myself, needed more tools to help their kids build a stronger foundation in math," she said.

Scheiner got some help from her neighbor, fitness expert Joanne Baizan, to create the video. Circles, lines, and polygon stretches using arm and leg

motions help teach children math during the workout. Scheiner stars in the video with her two children, Felicia, 5, and Aaron, 9, and two Tampa teens. Segments such as "Counting Calisthenics" and "Pattern Power" feature aerobic movements that challenge minds and muscles.

We asked Scheiner, 39, about her venture, whether she was an active kid and how she got her kids involved in *Gymathtics*.

How did you get the idea to combine two unlike activities — math and gymnastics?

The obesity epidemic and educational challenges in math and science are so prevalent in America today. . . . Math is in everything we do and it was logical to me that exercise involves counting, so why not count in fun creative ways. Exercise also involves shapes like arm circles and triangle pose, so we took the next step and added the educational components to create *Gymathtics*.

You said when your son turned 7, he basically wanted to sit in front of the computer or game system. Have your kids been your guinea pigs for this activity?

The preschool age offers so many educational programs and fun activities for children. I noticed that even at 7 my son wanted to play computer games or watch shows that had no educational content and that the only physical activities were sports or dance.

My children were the inspiration, guinea pigs, and cast members in the movie. They had so much fun participating in *Gymathtics* and are excited about doing a future movie. Now, Aaron is even providing ideas and trying to cast his friends.

Is the math especially hard or can anyone do it? For instance, would a 6-year-old feel good doing it as well as a 10-year-old?

We have had children as young as age 3 to as young at heart as age 73 enjoy the exercise routine. The vocabulary of the math concepts targets the second- to fifth-grade levels. So, younger children may not know the term isosceles triangle but they have probably seen the different triangle shapes

that are shown on the TV screen. Even adults may not remember their prime numbers up to 47, but they are shown on the TV screen and said out loud so all ages can follow along.

Were you an active kid?

I was an active child but not really an athletic child. I enjoyed playing outside with friends. In today's age, you cannot just let kids go out and play for hours. *Gymathtics* is an activity that kids can do in a safe environment that enriches their minds and bodies.

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Get the kids off the couch

To view and purchase the *Gymathtics* DVD, go to www.exploramania.com. It retails for \$24.99 and is currently offered at an introductory price of \$19.99. It is also available at Learning Express Toys of Tampa-Westchase and on Amazon.com.