

Visualizing the Pathways to MNRI® Success: The Six Cs, C2C, and +iT Together Tools

Dasaratha Rama, Ph.D, Parent, Weston, Florida, USA



Countless parents raise children, as we raised our first child, without having to learn the intricacies of human development. With our second child we found ourselves in a completely different situation. In retrospect, it seems incredible that our first son made it to an Ivy League School without our knowing anything about the Babinski or Foot Tendon Guard Reflex patterns, the various phases of the Hand-Grasp Reflex, and many other interesting issues related to human development. Now our second son is ensuring that we are developing a strong foundation in child development from a variety of specialists!

The process of raising our second child has been like completing a gigantic jigsaw puzzle that you have to work on for many years, knowing that you only have a few pieces. You may not even have the right pieces. At least, the pieces that you have may not be the right ones for your current situation. You know the right pieces are there somewhere for you to find and fit together. To make it more challenging, different people have different pieces of the puzzle. You have to find these people, get the right puzzle pieces, and start putting the puzzle together. As with many families of children with challenges and sensory motor deficits, we have been working on this jigsaw puzzle for years. We have found many pieces and know we will probably need to find many more in the future. One of the most valuable pieces that we have found is Masgutova Neurosensorimotor Reflex Integration (MNRI®), a program created by Dr. Svetlana Masgutova, which proposes a new modality of nerve system functioning – neurosensorimotor reflex integration – to facilitate development in children and adults with different abilities.

In this article, I will not discuss MNRI® itself but share three visualization tools that we as parents can use to get the most out of MNRI® and other approaches. These tools include: (1) The +iT Together™ Canvas, (2) The Six Cs Tree, and (3) C2C™ linkages.¹ These visualization tools can be used by parents and professionals to map their MNRI® journey, and to track progress. Given the uncertainty and complexity of juggling therapies, education, and daily life, I believe that these three visualization tools can help parents chart a course and navigate their MNRI® journey with greater ease and confidence.



Dasaratha Rama

¹The six Cs model was developed by Dr. Rama for The PhD Project (www.phdproject.org) but is applicable in many other contexts. The iT Together™ Canvas, the Six Cs tree, and C2C™ have been developed by Dr. Rama, and facilitate the delivery of the Six Cs model.

The +iT Together Canvas

The first visualization tool that parents can use to think about their MNRI® journey is the +iT Together canvas. The +iT Together canvas (see Figure 1) includes three main elements: (1) + represents services, experiences, resources, and ideas being added through MNRI® programs, (2) imagining (i) represents possibilities for activities and experiences that open up as the child's sensorimotor system develops, and (3) Transformation refers to changes that occur in the child's sensorimotor system, in the child's well-being, and in the family's well-being.

Figure 1 shows each of these three elements. Families can add (+) different services provided by the Svetlana Masgutova Educational Institute (SMEI) to their current mix of therapies. The '+' component includes Assessment activities, the treatment provided to clients, and the variety of concepts and techniques taught to parents for implementing their MNRI® home programs.

The 'i' (imagining possibilities) component is the less visible but powerful component of experiences such as MNRI® Family Conferences. In our experience, the value of Family Conferences goes beyond learning MNRI® techniques. One key benefit is being able to imagine new possibilities that can transform the child's and family's experiences. We have attended six family conferences since 2010. During each conference, we learned many techniques to implement in our Home Program. However, one of the most unexpected recommendations from a MNRI® Conference was to teach dance to our son. This recommendation has had a significant impact on our son and our family. Prior to the conference, I had not given this idea any thought. In fact, given our son's motor problems, I was not sure about how dance would work for him.

Our son started learning hip-hop and tap after one year of MNRI®. He also decided that he wanted to learn Bharathanatyam (classical dance from Southern India). Further, he has set himself a long-term goal of performing an 'arangetram' (a debut on-stage solo performance of a Bharathanatyam student after undertaking many years of training). He has started performing small pieces in public. He is highly motivated by dance and is very present when preparing for and presenting on stage. He also loves to attend classical dance performances in the US and in India. These new interests and activities have expanded his experiences and interactions with others. Dance has been a transformative force in our lives, one that we would not have discovered without MNRI®!

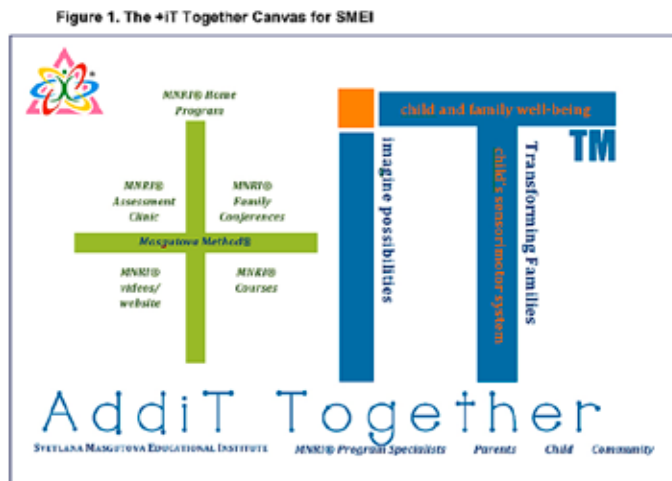
The key point is that MNRI® professionals have an important role to play in helping parents imagine possibilities. The changes in the child's sensorimotor system can be gradual and the significance of these changes may not be apparent to an untrained observer. By guiding parents to imagine possibilities, and to reflect on transformations in the child's sensorimotor system, MNRI® specialists can strengthen the pathways to parent success with MNRI® services.

The third component of the canvas is transformation (T). Through implementing the Home Program and expanding experiences, parents can support the transformation of their child's sensorimotor system as well as the child's and family's well-being. The key point is that transformation unfolds gradually over time. Parents play a critical role in this process; MNRI® Conferences help prepare the parent for this role.

Thinking in terms of these three components can help parents make better decisions. Family Conferences are expensive. However, these Conferences have been invaluable for us and have provided benefits that we may not have received by following another path

(e.g., working with a local professional over a period of time). The Six Cs model discussed in the next section provides further clarification into the value of different MNRI® services.

Based on Figure 1, here are some questions to get started with the +iT Together Canvas to think about your MNRI® journey (see Table 1):



+: Which MNRI® services are you using (planning to add)?

i: What possibilities can you imagine for your child and your family?

within one month:

within six months:

within a year:

T: What changes do you see in your child's sensorimotor system since you started using MNRI?

How can these changes enhance your child's well-being?

How can these changes enhance your family's well-being?

The Six Cs model (Figure 2) identifies six factors (Connections, Conversations, Coordination, Clarity, Choice, and Competence) that can help parents add the right mix of services, imagine possibilities for their child's development, and set the stage for their child's well-being as well as for overall family well-being.

Parent choice is a critical variable that affects MNRI® outcomes. Parents have to choose the appropriate mix of services (e.g., number and timing of MNRI® conferences and clinics, and video resources). Figure 2 shows how the other Cs affect a parent's ability to make effective choices. A parent with a supportive and well-informed network of Connections can engage in meaningful Conversations with others to gain Clarity and thus make better Choices. In other words, parents can cope with the challenges of ongoing decision-making under uncertainty by developing their own Six Cs. In summary, the value of the Six Cs elements can be understood in terms of the following statement:

The Six Cs are factors that parents intuitively address while dealing with the challenges of raising a child with disabilities. For example, many parents join support groups and participate in discussion forums. The value of the Six Cs tool is to make these variables explicit so that parents can think about the impact of these variables on MNRI® outcomes. During events such as the Family Conferences, parents can get too focused on developing competence through learning concepts and techniques. They may not take advantage of the other valuable opportunities at these conferences. For example, there are many opportunities to engage professionals and parents in conversations and to develop new connections.

The concept of C2C Linkages is designed to enhance the practical use of the Six Cs model. C2C Linkages draws attention to critical relationships between the Six Cs factors in a given situation. For example, a key question while implementing MNRI® programs is:

© 2015. Svetlana Masoutova Educational Institute® for Neuro-Sensory-Motor and Reflex Integration, SMEI (USA) » 223

Figure 2 identifies parent choice as a critical Six Cs variable that affects successful implementation of MNRI®. Figure 3 builds on this idea and expands the focus to a key relationship between two of the Six Cs elements (Choice and Coordination). While making their choices, parents have to figure out how to coordinate their existing relationships, resources, and activities with MNRI® treatment and Home Program. In other words, the key issue is not simply about choosing a service but of how to make it work in the long run through effective coordination with existing activities and experiences. By looking ahead and thinking about this issue, parents will be better positioned to succeed in implementing MNRI®. Figure 3 thus shows Choice to Coordination as a critical C2C pathway for parents.

Figure 3 also identifies an important supporting pathway: Conversations to Clarity. Parent conversations are a critical variable that affects MNRI® outcomes. During Family Conferences, parents also get opportunities to interact with many professionals and other parents. These conversations help parents gain clarity in making choices. By becoming aware of these factors, parents can make better decisions about services.

Considering C2C pathways explicitly in service delivery is important for parents, professionals, and the SMEI organization. Parents may be overwhelmed with the demands of parenting a child with significant challenges. They may need encouragement, opportunities, and support to engage in conversations. Professionals may be more focused on delivering services than on encouraging and participating in conversations. From an SMEI perspective, the Family Conferences are already designed to support parent conversations. By articulating the Six Cs and C2C Pathways, SMEI can continue to strengthen key pathways for parent success.

Six Cs and C2C Pathway Tools: Child

One of the key benefits of the Six Cs Tree is that we can use these tools to think about parents, children, and professionals. Again, the specific Cs that are most significant vary depending on the child's developmental level and family situation. The example below focuses on the child's Choices – a C that we have started emphasizing more as we have seen greater progress. Other Cs may be more important earlier in the MNRI® journey. Figure 4 shows Choices to Connections as a critical child pathway.

Continuing our dance example, one of the fundamental aims of the MNRI® Family Conferences is to develop the child's ability to be present and to focus, using specialized reflex patterns. Independence, inner control, choice making, motivation, and initiative evolve through focusing and presence. As our son started exploring music and dance, he started making his own Choices. He would initiate ideas about what kinds of music he wanted to learn. For example, he initiated the idea of learning Indian dance. He initiates routinely in music. This is still an area we need to strengthen but it is emerging and we expect to see it grow in the coming years.

As our son started making choices, his capacities to interact with others strengthened considerably. The music teacher responded to his initiations. He would jump up and down in excitement when she came to teach him! Once he asked her to take him to a music store to help him buy a book on patriotic music. Seeing his interest, she further nudged his musical development. She invited him to play for her friend who is a concert pianist in Venezuela and for an adult student. Recently, our son made an interesting observation about a

Figure 3. The Six Cs Tree with C2C Pathways



Table 2. Using the Six Cs Tree and C2C Pathways tools

<p>Six Cs How can you develop/use your Six Cs to be more successful with MNRI® programs?</p> <p>Connections Conversations Coordination Choice Coordination Competence</p>
<p>C2C: Choice to Coordination How can you coordinate your relationships and resources to make your MNRI® service choices work for your family?</p>
<p>C2C: Conversations to Clarity How can you sustain your participation in meaningful conversations to make MNRI® service choices work for their family?</p>

piece he was playing and she encouraged him to write to the author. Dance, music, and visual arts have opened the doors to making choices and developing connections.

The Six Cs tool can be used to imagine possibilities for the child in a systematic way. As the child's sensorimotor system strengthens, he is better able to make connections, engage in conversations to gain clarity, coordinate with others, make choices, and develop competence. The next section integrates the +iT Together and Six Cs tools for parent and child.

Strengthening +iT Together in Families with MNRI® Family Conferences

As discussed in an earlier section, it is important to consider the 'iT' elements in understanding the benefits of the MNRI® program. In this section, I will use the +iT Together, Six Cs, and C2C Linkages tools to discuss MNRI® Family Conferences. In our experience, the family conferences are the most expensive yet most beneficial service delivery option. Given the expense, the use of the tools discussed in this article to think about the Family Conference experience can help families better use the opportunities at these Conferences.

Table 3 is a reflection template that integrates the +iT and Six Cs elements. For example, the first row of the table lists examples of different opportunities for interactions that parents can use to engage in conversations, to gain clarity into MNRI® programs, and to make choices. Together, these experiences can help parents learn MNRI® techniques and to begin imagining new possibilities for their child.

Summary and Additional Ideas

This article presented three visualization tools (+iT Together canvas, Six Cs Tree, and C2C Linkages) that can be used by parents and professionals to map and to track their MNRI® journey. The use of these tools can help parents navigate their MNRI® journey with greater ease and confidence.

Figure 5 presents an integrated +iT Canvas. This canvas includes the parent and child Six Cs tree and can be used as a one page reference that summarizes all three tools. The items at the bottom of the canvas are a useful part of the overall concept. We can think about the +iT and Six Cs components in terms of SMEI, MNRI® specialists, parents, children, and the community. For example, as the child's sensorimotor system evolves, parents are better able to leverage others in their community to work with their child.

In thinking about the Six Cs, it is useful to think about parent-professional interactions as well as the interactions between parents. For example, while we started dance because of a suggestion made by Dr. Masgutova, our experiences have created possibilities for additional conversations. Two of the parents I know have started or are planning to start a dance program for their sons. Dr. Masgutova can also point to our son and others like him to encourage other parents to pursue this option.

Finally, we live in an environment that offers many opportunities to address the significant challenges that our children face. If we can harness resources and use them effectively, we can enhance the child's sensorimotor systems, and the capacity to learn and to interact with others. The

Figure 4. The Six Cs Tree - Child



Table 3. +iT Together Reflection Tool for Family Conference

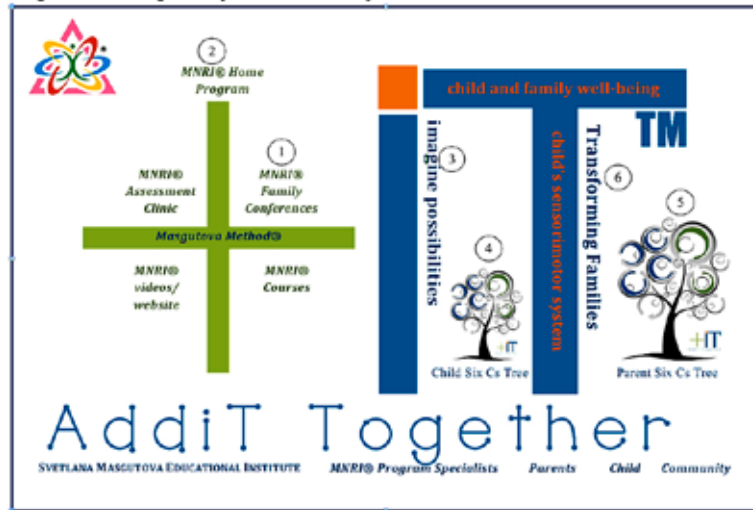
1	<div> <div> + services: MNRI® Family Camp therapy sessions evening presentations/workshops </div> <div> lunch snack breaks </div> </div>
2	+ MNRI® Home Program
3	i: imagining Possibilities
4	i: imagining Possibilities: Child Six Cs
5	T: Supporting Transformation: Parent Six Cs
6	<div>T: Reflecting on Transformation</div> <div> (a) Child sensorimotor system (b) Child well-being (c) family well-being </div>

REFLEXES OF THE BRAIN

MNRI® method offers unique opportunities to empower individuals through strengthening their sensorimotor systems. By encouraging parents to develop their own Six Cs, SMEI can empower parents to select appropriate services and to persist in their application of MNRI® techniques over an extended period of time in order to realize the potential of this approach.

More information on +iT Together and Six Cs tools can be found at www.c2cpathways.com. Follow C2C Pathways on Twitter (@c2cpathways) for updates and suggestions on using these tools and resources.

Figure 5. Visualizing Pathways to Success: Family Conference



Congratulations to Ananth for your success in personality development, curiosity, and expression through profound dance. Your dancing skills are extraordinary and express the depth of sensorimotor integration and the beautiful blossoming of your heart and emotions. Our MNRI® Team expresses our congratulations to you and the wonderful support and interest of your dear parents. – Pamela Curlee