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# Madeline's Mind

We may never understand exactly how the mind informs behavior, but we can observe the phenomenon in others, especially the young.

Observe any person, doing almost anything at all, and sooner or later a prevailing behavior will reveal itself. For some 15 items or less is a rule to live by, others treat it as a casual suggestion, and still others as an average to be reached over time. Most stop for red lights, while others barrel through without the slightest concern. Some like dogs, others cats, a few fancy fish, and fewer still favor their fine feathered friends.

We may never understand exactly how the mind informs behavior, but we can observe the phenomenon in others — especially the young. My niece Madeline did that for me exactly ten years ago today.

I was Madeline's personal taxi. She sat on my shoulders and directed me either by words, or (mostly) gentle hair tugs. One Saturday, after dinner at the local mall, I was steered into a noisy arcade. Madeline ignored the skee-ball machines, flying

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simulators, and shoot-em-up games. Pinball commanded no admiration at all, and the vintage Pac-Man machine was granted less respect than hair salon gossip. The only game that drew her attention was the dancing game.

As we approached the game Madeline kicked my neck; her way of suggesting that I stop. I stopped. Madeline dismounted and swiftly assumed a position in front of the game. Her knees were slightly bent and her arms assumed the attitude of a gun slinger. She watched the splash screen for a few minutes and then began to dance along with the characters on the screen, matching them move for move.

She may still be there were it not for the arrival of some older kids who wanted to play the game. Instead of asking for consideration they rudely muscled their way in front of the screen, removing Madeline from her happy position.

Madeline waited for the sound of clinking quarters, made her way to the electrical outlet, pulled the plug, offered it to the kids who had been playing the game, and apologized with convincing if not actual sincerity.

It's been ten years and I still have no explanation for Madeline's behavior. What I do know is, in that moment I witnessed the emergence of Madeline's mind. I wonder if she will stop for red lights.

**This document available at:**

<http://www.mcmanna.com/madelinesmind/>

**Half Brained Slogans**

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