DELAYED REACTION

Look before you leap…
Count to ten…
Think before you speak…

A lot of old axioms, but strangely, necessary for our survival.

Very simplistically, we can consider two aspects of the brain function as it reacts to the world about it. One part thinks about things before reacting. Properly, we call this a symbol reaction, but for now let's call it **The thinking brain**. We have another part of the brain that reacts almost without thinking, or a signal reaction. For now let us call that **The hot stove brain**.

If you put your finger on a hot stove, you do not take the time to think "My goodness, this is very hot. It is burning my finger. I think I will take my finger off the stove." This would not be a good thing. Instead your **hot stove brain** sends an almost instant verbal message, "Take your finger off the stove!"

However, part of the message, "The stove is hot" did get through to your **thinking brain.** It had to pass through your **hot stove brain** first so it took just a tiny bit longer. Now the **thinking brain** can go into action. "Why is the stove hot? Oh, someone forgot to turn it off. Which handle turns it off? This one. I will turn it off. I will be more careful next time".

(Teacher: Have ready a wadded up notebook page. Without warning, pretend to throw it at a student.)

It was only a piece of paper, but you ducked. Why? It couldn't hurt you. What part of your brain took over? The **hot stove brain.** The **hot stove brain** reacts quickly to protect you. It also may have said "The teacher is picking on me." "The teacher is unfair." Etc.

On the other hand, say you swam too far out in a lake and you could not make it back. A lifeguard swims out to save you. When he arrives, your **hot stove brain** says, "Grab onto him, don't let him go!" And if you grab tightly enough, both of you drown. The messages never got through to the **thinking brain.** If it had, you might have reasoned that it was better to follow your rescuer's instructions. So you see, that **hot stove brain** can at times be a big help, and at times it can cause you great problems.

Teacher: *Undoubtedly, at times you have asked the class a question, a dozen hands shoot up, and one eager student comes out with something totally off the wall. Obviously a reaction without any real thought. On certain days, when you are going to ask questions, tell the students not to raise their hands immediately. Instead, take time to permit the question to reach their* ***thinking brains.*** *After a period of about 5 or 6 seconds, ask "Who has thought about this answer?" Perhaps there will be fewer off-the-wall answers. Run the drill every once in a while, and often remind the students to use their* ***thinking brains.***