

# Why Her Brain Likes Trucks!



## Her Toy Truck

Society has a mind set of what it considers appropriate gender roles for girls and boys and starts right off at birth with the assigned distinctions of pink and blue. It also expects that little girls and little boys brains will wire themselves accordingly.

As infants continue to develop they will, for the most part, naturally gravitate to gender related toys and play. However, we get a little stymied trying to understand when little girls prefer trucks over dolls.

The brain is not born completely wired and scientists know the brain continues to wire itself in response to on-going environmental factors. Does this mean that girls who prefer trucks were the only female child among male siblings or received more paternal than maternal exposure?

**Ah! Here's where the female brain gets tricky.**

Yes, girls can model or imitate the behavior of surrounding males and maybe be perceived later in life as being more masculine. Now, they may be masculine-like in behavior and/or they may be very good at masculine skills such as visuospatial relationships. But, on the other hand, this also does not explain why girls with the same male exposure will remain very feminine in nature.

Actually there may be something else happening here and it

goes back to the male hormone **testosterone**. According to *Dr. Mona Lisa Schultz*, it is the X chromosome that is the controlling factor for both the brain's and the body's sensitivity to testosterone and other androgens. Mothers who are unduly stressed during pregnancy will increase the output of androgens from their adrenal glands.

Since a female fetus is a XX combination there is increased sensitivity to testosterone and other male androgens. The additional exposure to these androgens from prenatal stress elevates masculinity in the developing female brain.

Schultz goes on to explain that prenatal stress does not also confer sexual preference. Gender behavior and traits reside in multiple networks areas of the brain separate from sexual preference networks. For some male-like traits continue throughout life along side traditional female traits as well.

While you can't assign every gender trait difference to prenatal stress, **it does help to understand that female brains are unique, different and complicated.**

**But then you knew that didn't you!**

By Joyce Hansen