

The brain game

Tired of body building? Try "brain building," a unique method of reorganizing your thinking.

"Designs for Strong Minds," developed by Highland Park's Donalee Markus, introduces new management techniques for solving problems. Using what first appear

Donalee Markus teaches clients how to solve problems

to be silly diagrams, puzzles and number games she designed herself, this therapist guides her students through mind-expansion exercises in the

basement office of the French Provincial-style home she shares with her husband, Dr. Norman Markus. They have four children, Roderick, 23, Lindsey-Paige, 18, and twins, Brent and Gavin, 13.

"This is the age of the brain. Previously, we were in an information age where information meant power," contends this confident 49-year-old who holds degrees in education from Evanston's National College of Education and a doctorate in administrative sciences from Northwestern University. "Today, information is so readily available, we have to learn how to organize it."

The heart of her theory is that creativity is a way of thinking and that information can be reorganized by looking at the whole and breaking it into parts. And she believes everyone is a candidate for that improvement, regardless of IQ.

"Intelligence is modifiable at any age," says Markus. "I have killed the Peter Principle, which claims that everyone who is good at their work eventually rises to their level of incompetence."

She cites one "super salesman" whose performance in his job earned him a promotion to regional sales manager. However, once he got there, he found he was



Markus says mind expansion exercises can help build constructive work habits.

overwhelmed by the responsibilities of the job.

"He was absolutely charming and extremely charismatic, and that's why he was so successful at sales," she recalls. "What he enjoyed was dealing with people. What he couldn't do was delegate. And since he didn't understand how he processed information, he couldn't show other people, like his sales force, how to do what he did."

The result was that his desk was overflowing with unread letters, unanswered memos and unsolved problems.

"His difficulty was that the skills needed to manage are different from the skills needed for selling," says Markus. "He had no idea of how to look at the whole picture and break it down to develop a strong organizational system." Fortunately, Markus was able to help him accomplish that.

Adapting the work of Israeli educator Reuven Feuerstein, who studied under Swiss psychologist Jean Piaget, Markus begins the exercise by asking her clients to copy a geometric drawing of a fish. By handing the client different colored crayons at short intervals, she observes the ways in