

Top Strategies to Unleash Your Child's Learning Potentials from Home....

For one thing it does not require lots of money. Every experience in the home can be a learning one. All we have to do is to be conscious of the process of learning.

Since the channel of learning is triggered by our senses, namely touch, smell, taste, sight and hearing, the primary role of the parent is to enhance this. One way to sharpen a child's senses is during cooking. Help child associate smell with the ingredients. For example, get child used to naming the spices just by smelling them. Bring the child's attention to the different colours of fruits and vegetables and ask them why do you think they are of different colours? What is the difference between coriander leaves and Chinese spring onion leaves? This is working at improving their observation skills. It is the start of teaching them compare and contrast. Also, get children used to the concept of texture. Feeling something is a great way of stimulating the brain cells. Vocabulary is also enhanced when we used words like rough, smooth or sandy texture. Even if the words are not there, just getting them aware of the subtle differences in the aroma of two spices is already in itself a great learning activity.

Fill the house with books and reading materials. These need not be expensive because you can scout around for second hand stuff and get hand me downs from friends and relatives. The visual impact of seeing these materials in the home goes a long way in creating interest and stimulating the curiosity of the mind. When we consider that what you are exposed to as a child goes into your long term memory, then this undoubtedly is a worthwhile investment. A variety is always good – it serves to enhance and enrich the mind.

Give children responsibilities appropriate for their ages. This builds self-esteem knowing you trust and depend on them. Even if they did not do it the way you want them to – search for a positive aspect and praise it. Impress on them how much you appreciate their contribution. And then follow up that with the question on 'how they can do it better next time'. This builds self-esteem, the one most essential factor in motivating a child to learn.

Study time should be a family affair wherever possible. Not an easy thing to accomplish but with determination and effort it can be done. At least switch off TV and everyone sit together (unless the child prefers to study alone). This is to instill the concept of learning as a normal fun thing for everyone – and not something you have to do alone and in a boring way – especially for younger children.

Reading should be another familiar activity in the home – in fact is a MUST HAVE THING. Can be done together, individually, or listening to tapes. Nothing can take the place of reading ('a page a day keeps the dull mind away' – my corny own saying). The benefits are so numerous that I cannot even begin to illustrate the impact reading has on the whole individual. Reading is the input into the brain, triggers imagination, enhances vocabulary, introduces concepts, jolts the thinking skills and allows the mind to travel to places beyond what one can normally do. Give children opportunity to pick what to read. Take turns to read. Remember do not overly correct – is a definite turn off. Ask questions as you go along – and allow any response to be acceptable. Reading in bed is great. The last thing one is exposed to before sleeping is the one thing that the brain will concentrate on processing.

Discussions should be a constant feature in the home. Allow child to give opinions even if they seem ridiculous to you. After all every great invention started with an idea that everyone else thought was stupid. Even television series can be a topic for discussion. Its also a great way to find out more about your child – how he or she thinks – what are his or her values. Control yourself from 'correcting' your child. Every time a child comes up with an opinion – the most important thing is to ask why they say that. That teaches them to get evidence to support a statement – the beginning of logical thinking.

Lots of fun and movement activities. These are the two factors that enhances the process of learning. It can be as simple as dancing together, playing games that requires you to touch your kids. Because with every touch you give your child it is actually stimulating and activating his or her brain cells. Play simple games that can be carried out at any time. For example, let me touch your head and you guess which finger I used is great for sharpening the senses, hence the mind. Or games that require you to roll around with your kids.

The power of music should not be underestimated. Music can influence the state of emotion which in turn can impact learning. Music creates fun and energy which is also conducive for learning. Putting information into a musical context can make memorizing easier. And music is also important for relaxation and calming the mind. Motivational songs can embed the right values and beliefs needed for a child to succeed in life. Choose energetic songs with lyrics that are empowering. This reaches the sub-conscious and will be part of the child's programming. Avoid songs that have words like "its fated" (nasib yang malang..dah takdir). We do not want to teach such negative beliefs to our children.

Finally, check whether the atmosphere in the home is fun and a relaxed one. Remember, no family is perfect. The important thing is not to take things too

seriously. Make it a safe place to make mistakes because that's what ultimately learning is all about.

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