



Learning beyond school



By Monica Sood

Monica is the co-founder of Author In Me, a company that specialises in conducting creative, vocabulary and emotional intelligence course for 7-12 years old. Monica has co-authored numerous education resource material for Author In Me and is actively involved in conceptualising, structuring and conducting the A-I-M courses.

Children are naturally inquisitive and start learning as early as their cognitive senses start to develop. Then why do some children find learning daunting and get demotivated when they encounter difficulty, whereas others with similar skills continue to strive and learn? The Co-founder of Author In Me, Monica Sood, shares her opinion and tips that can inspire children to be confident learners.

Motivation plays an important part when it comes to academic learning which may be different from child to child, depending on their age or even their mood. An important task is then to figure out how a child's motivation can be raised. We need to identify factors that influence their motivation to learn.

At Author In Me, we begin all the workshops/courses with a short fun exercise that is strategically planned to allow children to introspect themselves. This short exercise consists of a series of questions to make them aware of their strengths and to empower them before the actual session begins. The objective of this exercise is to create a stimulating environment to reinforce self-belief, pride and confidence in them.

Once children complete this exercise, it is astounding to see their enthusiasm and the perseverance they show to learn new concepts and complete any assigned task. Not only do they take ownership of their tasks but also willingly participate in all group activities. Even children, who according to their parents are shy, come out of their shell and beam with confidence. They participate



willingly in activities such as role play and thought-sharing activities.

This shows that the feelings of self-worth and an encouraging learning environment can influence a child's approach to social situations and academic achievement. Studies have even revealed that children with positive perceptions of themselves are more likely to outperform academically and socially, perhaps because they believe and focus on their strengths to achieve success and aren't dissuaded by failure.

Various other factors such as home environment, teaching approach and the myths that surround intelligence and success can also influence their desire to learn.

Over time, I have realised that a few simple tools can help us to bring the best out of our children and augment their desire to learn. Listed below are few of those.

Acquaint children to their inner core strength

Have a meaningful conversation with your child about their day at school/home. Highlight the events where you believe they had shown a particular strength such as helping a friend, taking a different route to solve a problem etc. Talk about their actions and feelings that make them unique. This can create a profound impact on the way they perceive themselves. You can also use affirmation cards to embed a certain value or belief that you believe they lack or need encouragement on. For instance, by putting a simple note in their lunch box such as, 'you are beautiful and loved by everyone' can reinforce self-love in a child and also brighten up their day at school.

Unis should work more closely with schools and colleges

Universities UK has responded to the Department for Education's widening participation in higher education statistics.

Commenting on the widening participation in higher education statistics published today, **Alistair Jarvis, Acting Chief Executive of Universities UK**, said: "Universities have made considerable progress in this area in recent years, but there is more work to be done. All universities are committed to widening participation and to ensuring that everyone is given the right support to succeed.

"The 2016 report from Universities

UK's social mobility advisory group recommended that universities should work even more closely with schools and colleges in a range of ways, given the strong link between a student's prior attainment at school, and their outcomes at and beyond university.

"The report also recommended that, to make further progress, more effective evaluation of policies and interventions is needed. We need to improve the use of data in driving future developments and a focus on 'what works' underpinned by a robust and systematic use of the evidence."

individual by practicing and working hard. We need to educate our children that perseverance, focus and determination can reap the best results for them.

Even studies have shown that an overemphasis on intellect or talent and the implication that such traits are innate and fixed leaves children vulnerable to failure, fearful of challenges and unmotivated to learn.

Learning is fun

Learning is fun. Especially if you know how to make it enjoyable.

In order to make learning effective, we need to ensure that learning engages all the senses and taps the emotional side of the brain, through methods like humour, storytelling, group activities and games. Emphasis on the rational and logical alone does not produce powerful memories. Remember that brain can store new concepts easily and for longer periods if powerful memories are associated with it.

As we are rearing a generation that is growing in a vastly different environment from what we had, it's more important now than ever to enlighten ourselves first in order to help them. With technology at their fingertips, increasing academic pressure along with many extracurricular activities, children are leading a life where it is easy to get influenced by others and lose their own identity. Therefore, it becomes essential for us to encourage them to discover their own strengths so that they lead meaningful lives and grow to become the best possible version of themselves. Success is derived from developing these abilities through every day learning and putting them to effective use. Once they identify their own potential, accomplishments in academics and careers is inevitable.

Learn to praise effectively

The words we use to praise our children can immensely help them shape their mind set. We should learn to appreciate their hard work and innovative strategies they use to complete a task rather than for their intelligence. By doing this we are changing children's mind set and making them believe that success can be achieved by hard work and determination not by possessing a certain talent. This approach can assist them to overcome negative beliefs about success.

Realities of myths

Educating them about how our brain learns and works by explaining verbally or showing videos (which are available on various media platforms) will further strengthen their belief that mastery in any skill or academic success is not limited to superior intelligence however it can be achieved by any



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