

INSIGHTS

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Raising kids to be lifelong learners

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Technology is one area that constantly changes and renews. It was only a few ago that CDs replaced cassettes. Now I drive a car with an iPod adapter but no CD player. CDs are so 2009! Let's not even talk about vinyl records...

Advances in technology mean that we constantly need to change our skills and knowledge, both at home and at work, to avoid being left behind. The new social divide is not so much between rich and poor, but between those who can adapt to change and those who can't. Adapting to change requires you to be constantly learning.

Modern education is no longer about preparing kids to get a job. As the world now expects and rewards continuous learners, today's schools try their best to help kids see themselves as lifelong learners who are able to easily adapt to change.



Kids are natural copycats

As you well know, kids learn what they live. If you want your kids to value learning then you need to go first. Kids need to see that their parents value learning, not just by giving it lip-service, but by embracing change and being active learners themselves.

There are plenty of ways you can show kids that you are a constant learner. Challenging yourself in the kitchen, using new social media, and researching holidays online are simple ways to show kids that you embrace change and that you are willing to learn new skills and knowledge.

Kids learn in different ways

It also helps to talk with kids about different ways of learning and different ways of being smart. The modern education scene is familiar with the concept of multiple intelligences and different ways of learning. It really helps if you know your preferred style and where you are smart, so you can help your kids to do the same. For instance, I'm a practical learner who learns best by doing rather than being shown. I can be given instructions to work out something technical, but I won't learn it until I try it a few times. I also know that I do my best problem solving when I have a pen in my hand or I'm in front of a keyboard.

My son, on the other hand, is a very different learner. He is very visual and loves to learn by using charts and other prompts. He's also at his problem-solving best in a physical environment such as a kitchen or in the great outdoors. He does his most creative thinking when he's on the move rather than in front of a keyboard. This sort of self-knowledge about learning preferences aids more effective learning.

Mistakes are part of learning

It also helps if you can reinforce to kids that mistakes are part of learning. In fact, most kids fail their way to success. That's how they learned to walk, talk and play with each other. Your attitude to errors will affect your children's view of themselves as learners. If you overreact when kids don't get things right then kids will, in all likelihood, cease taking risks for fear of making mistakes. However, if you see mistakes as learning opportunities, or simply the first step to getting things right, then kids are more likely to develop a healthy attitude to learning, and realise that really effective learning takes time, effort and energy.

As parents we need to nurture questioning, curiosity and problem-solving in our kids so they hook into the concept of being continuous learners. The world we are preparing them for demands nothing less!

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