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Q & A

Education With Lina.

Colourful Learning!

Q. I enjoyed reading your Power of the Story article. I have a two year old son, and would love to inculcate his interest in reading from now only, but he simply refuses to sit down and go through a book. Can you please guide me, how can I make him enjoy books?

Rohini Saldhana, Hyderabad

A. Research has shown us that families play an important role in helping children to read. The single most important thing you can do is read to your child everyday. Make sure that you read the stories using appropriate voice modulations and facial expressions to make the story animated and interesting. Introduce activities that increase the child's attention span - picture talks, different kinds of books like touch and feel books, flap books wherein the child is curious to find which picture is behind the flap, sound books, and then gradually move on picture books with very little text.

Reading print in the environment is another very pre reading exercise - point out to words on wrappers, tins, shop signs and so on.

How to use picture books with a 2 year old child? Hold your child in a comfortable position in your lap, open the book and point to the picture. Tell your child what the picture is and then move on to specific details. Choose picture books with big, clear illustrations. Pictures of familiar objects are the best. Rhyming stories are a good way to keep a child's attention and to encourage listening skills. Ask your child lots of questions. Draw attention to words, your child may not be able to read them at this stage but he will make sense of them later. He might like to help you to point to words as you go along.

Q There are various interhouse and interschool competitions that take place in my child's school. I am at times confused whether I should make her compete in those activities that she is not good at, for I fear she might get demotivated. What do you think?

Sejal Tarachand, Ahmedabad

A Competition as a backdrop for personal excellence: It is prudent to let your child participate and compete in various activities but what you need to do is to identify and harness her strengths and nurture them. Remember no one, but a mother can best recognize and track down a child's weaknesses and strengths. Do not ignore the child's weaknesses rather work on it to bring it to an average level - but focus on your girl's strengths spending maximum time and effort on it. Communicate to your child her strengths or likings. Encourage her by telling her that she is good in those fields /areas eg. dance, song, mimicry - When we are told, we are good, we tend to become better.

Competition as a positive learning experience: Devote considerable time in building your child's strengths in those activities giving her special coaching, providing her with the relevant resources. If she has a talent and flair for music encourage her accordingly, by giving her professional guidance. Always motivate her so that passion and endurance can develop in her a crackling confidence. By encouraging her you get a chance to push her mental or physical capabilities into high gear

Positive value of Competition: Let your child compete in all the activities initially to enable her to gain an insight into the various options, opportunities and activities offered within the school curriculum. They will channelize and tap her inherent talent and flair prodding her to cultivate a variety of skills. This would test the ground for her, before she firmly finds a foothold in any one activity where she can eventually flourish and excel.

Competition can be a positive force in a child's life: According to Bobbi Conner in his book on parenting, competitions shape a child's aspirations and help her to set goals. He says competitions provide a context in which a child learns important lessons about winning or losing and perseverance. These competitions provide an opportunity to see realistically that others may be better at certain tasks, without undermining a child's sense of self worth. Competitions teach a child how to accept defeat with grace and dignity.

Competitions can shape the future: Participation in various competitions would fuel a surge of energy in teaching her how to handle and perform under pressure. This mixture of anxiety, excitement and disappointment will hold her in good stead throughout her life. You can make her compete in those activities that she is not good at by guiding her and motivating her that although she is competing against others, the focus can still be on her own improvement or growth. These competitions will help her to increase her physical and mental stamina, learn new skills, develop self confidence and enjoy exercise. Raise her spirits by reinforcing the fact that life will present many more opportunities for her to perform, compete and prove /her mettle.

Competitions accentuate and foster enduring life skills in a child like team spirit 'goal setting, positive learning, accepting disappointments, winning with humility and losing with grace.