

Getting Children To Stay Focused

By: Y Marcus

Encouraging a young child to participate in an educational activity can be very difficult. Some children, especially those with learning delays can have a hard time staying focused on one specific task for even several minutes. There will always be something to catch their attention and divert their focus. This can be very frustrating for parents that want to work with their children on developing their learning skills.

Parents and caretakers often feel that they must settle for a minute or two of their child's attention that they are able to capture. While every minute of learning does benefit a child to some degree, nothing compares to sitting with a child and completing an activity from start to finish. While this may seem like an impossible task for some parents, there are ways for parents to improve their chances of keeping their children interested.

One important tip is to create structure for the play session. Most children thrive in structured environments that force them to focus on one thing at a time. The more structure, the less room there is for distractions. The best method of accomplishing this is by setting a specific location and seating arrangement for your play sessions. Invest in a child-size table and chair set and place in a particular area of your home. It pays to spend more and purchase a wooden set, since they tend to last much longer and are more likely to support an adult's weight. Set a specific time to sit down and work or play with your child, be it once a day or once a week. Although it does not have to be at the same exact time each day, it is recommended to be at the same interval of the day, such as after breakfast or before bath time.

Another good tip is to minimize the number of items on the table at any given time. If the activity includes several steps, introduces the items used in those steps only when needed. For example, when drawing a picture, first introduce the crayons, and then the stamps and then the glitter at the end. The items not being used should be out of sight (on the floor). This helps children focus on the task at hand and keeps them excited about what's coming next.

It also helps to minimize the number of possible distractions. If you're in the family room, make sure the television is off. It also helps if the room is relatively clean and free of clutter although this is understandably very often unrealistic.

The last tip is to stay focused yourself. If you are interrupted by phone calls or other responsibilities you are likely to lose the child's interest.

These ideas should prove to be useful and produce positive results, but always keep in mind that some children are just very excited by the presence of parents and loved ones and may not work well with them because of no fault of their own.

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