

Q&A

HOW PARENTS AND EDUCATORS CAN CREATE A CONDUCTIVE PHYSICAL SPACE AND POSITIVE MINDSET FOR LEARNING.



Q My child keeps getting distracted. How can I help my child focus better on a task?

To accomplish any task, children need to focus and concentrate on it for some amount of time. However, they may be easily distracted by people, sounds and sights; or feel restless, fidget or leave their seats instead of completing the activity. They may also rarely follow instructions carefully and completely; have difficulty waiting in line or for their turn; or feel tired due to lack of sleep or poor nutrition.

Some practical tips to boost your child's focus and concentration:

- **Give tasks according to your child's developmental level.** Children tend to lose focus when the tasks assigned to them are very easy or too difficult. You can help them break down the tasks into smaller segments, so they are easier to manage.
- **Play games that require the child to pay attention** such as "Simon Says the Opposite". For instance, when you say "touch your nose", children should touch any part of their body but their nose.
- **Encourage children to set their own goals or plans.** Have children create a plan or schedule and follow it. Afterwards, talk together about what went well and what did not, and what to prepare next time.
- **Inculcate healthy lifestyle habits.** Physical exercise, adequate sleep, a balanced diet and playtime are essential for developing a healthy mind and the ability to focus.

Q What are some key principles for designing learning environments to encourage positive behaviours in young children?

In designing learning environments or spaces and selecting materials, it is important to understand how children learn and play. A well-designed environment helps them feel emotionally safe and secure to explore, learn and discover. Authors Jessica DeViney, Sandra Duncan and Sara Harris in their book, *Inspiring Spaces for Young Children*, list four key design principles which can be summarised as follows:

1. **Nature-aligned.** Infuse the space with natural elements such as plants or wallpaper in green or beige. Rocks, twigs and other natural materials can also be used in learning activities.
2. **Heart-centred.** Design empathically from the children's viewpoint. Place materials and books at their eye level or within reach, while decorative items can be placed higher up. Put up overhanging items for infants to see while laying on their backs.
3. **Sensory-based.** Provide developmentally-appropriate and intellectually-stimulating materials that allow for multi-sensory experiences. Examples include a dress-up box with old clothes; an inventor's box with recycled items; pretend play areas such as a kitchen; and items like play dough.
4. **Authentically-inspired.** Provide materials that are used in real life. Set up a home corner using pots, pans, utensils and cutlery. Add soft furnishings such as cushions, rugs and mats to create a "lived-in", welcoming space.



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