

Mediated Learning Experience

as defined by Reuven Feuerstein

Developing your child's thinking abilities

Improving Interactions with Your Child by Mediating their World

Feuerstein recognized three powerful parameters of human interaction by watching mothers and infants, parents and children, and teachers and students. They are simplistic yet profound.

Intentionality and Reciprocity

The first one is the most important and is two-fold - intentionality and reciprocity. As a parent you intentionally interact with your child to develop his or her ability to reciprocate back. This is what will develop their ability to think and play and learn to their highest possible potential. It begins before birth when an infant in the womb hears human voices. Then as a six week old the smiling exchange begins. Parents love this phase when their little one responds to loving gazes and smiles. Then speech develops with cooing and babbling and eventually lots and lots of words come spilling out as parent and toddler learn to communicate - a truly beautiful time. Older children may sometimes feel like there is a lot of intentionality from a parent but no listening when they attempt to reciprocate. Finding time to actually listen to your child will pay off during the teen years when parents are often desperate for intentionality and reciprocity.

Meaning

The second important parameter parents mediate for is meaning. This is the emotional and energetic part of our interaction with children. We engage with our child so they can socialize politely with other children and adults. Parents normally want the very best possible future for their child so almost everything a parent mediates has a meaningful reason behind it, from learning to brush teeth to doing chores to hearing Bible stories. When we gather around a table and hear stories from Grandpa, decorate a Christmas tree, or travel to Aunt Shirley's house, the culture of a family is mediated to a child. Explaining to children why we do these things is very helpful and meaningful. The Judeo-Christian beliefs have been handed down for generations via mediation of meaning. This is who we are and why we do the things we do. Without a culture, children exist in a vacuum and intelligence will struggle to develop. Help your child know the *why* of learning something. Be enthusiastic and positive when interacting with your child.

Transcendence

Parents and teachers strive to help children generalize their learning. Can a child learn how to do this task today and also tomorrow? Can she transfer the learning to a new similar situation? An important goal for parents is to work themselves out of a job and have an independent young adult someday who can think for themselves. Everyone must learn to be adaptable to whatever life challenges come their way. Mediating for transcendence is having this overarching goal for our interactions with our children. Am I helping my son or daughter be ready to be

a successful adult who loves God and serves Christ in his or her life and in many different situations? In the Christian faith we mediate for generations to come behind us, not just for today!

More Parameters of Mediated Learning Experience

There are nine more ways to mediate that are used depending upon the needs of your child. You probably already mediate very well. However, the goal here is to help you be more aware of these additional parameters of mediation, the need to use them, and how they can help your child develop cognitive abilities. The list below provides you with a few ideas to consider for each of the nine. You use them situationally, depending upon the needs of your child.

I could mediate my child for:

Feeling of Competence

- highlight successful attempts
- help analyze mistakes in a positive way
- plan competence building activities
- compare success now to the past (keep examples of work)

Sharing Behavior

- model sharing things and ideas consistently and often
- set up purposeful situations for sharing
- provide time for verbal sharing ideas, thoughts

Accepting a Challenge

- encourage increasingly difficult problem-solving
- make accepting a challenge a good thing
- encourage learning for the sake of learning
- model accepting challenges as opportunities

Self-Regulation and Control of Behavior

- coach to stop, think, plan
- demand well-articulated communication
- develop listening skills
- practice quiet sitting routines

Individuation

- truly respect a child's individuality
- encourage divergent thinking
- honor each person as someone of value with contributions

Goal Oriented Behavior

- ___ guide the consideration of goals
- ___ help define steps to achieve goals
- ___ practice seeking goals
- ___ celebrate the attainment of small goals

Ability to Change

- ___ enhance awareness of ability to change
- ___ help learn strategies for change
- ___ recognize self-change when it happens

Optimistic Alternatives

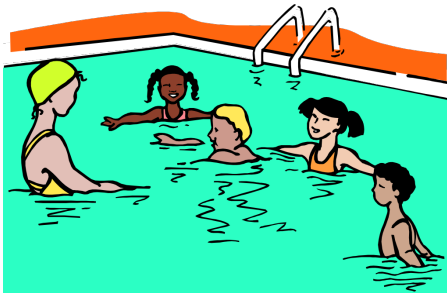
- ___ instill hope
- ___ **Hold On to Positive Expectation**
- ___ help your child develop new strategies
- ___ encourage, encourage, encourage

Belonging

- ___ discuss the need for belonging to a family
- ___ find others who need a friend
- ___ help your child know they are an important part of this family

The Adult as Mediator Instead of Enabler

When your child becomes old enough to begin learning tasks and then starting academics, there are some ways to consider how much we should or should not help our child. Generally, parents tend to do too much for their child, especially if the child has cognitive challenges or we are in a hurry. It's always easier to do it ourselves. The following section shares levels of assistance and how to give feedback to your child, especially helpful when doing homework. If possible, begin with simply asking the child to identify what the problem is and stop there if he or she can take it from there. Move through the levels of assistance slowly and don't skip steps. By allowing them to do the work, we are developing their capacity to think and learn!



Can the swim coach teach you to swim by talking about how good a swimmer she is?

How can children learn to think without given an opportunity?

Consider the following ideas:

- Do not over-assist
- Do not take away a learning opportunity
- Provide no more assistance than is necessary for successful participation
- Less is more!

Levels of Assistance (always start low)

1. Encourage child to identify problem

- a. What do you see?
- b. What do you think you are supposed to do?
- c. Can you tell me about this problem?

2. Help child determine his/her own approach to the task

- a. What do you think you could do to solve this?
- b. What will you do first?
- c. Do you have any ideas of how to start?
- d. What strategy do you think might work?

3. Suggest an approach/strategy

- a. I wonder if it would work if you....
- b. What about trying to
- c. I have an idea, but you might think of a better one.
- d. Let's try this...

4. Lead child to a response

- a. Look at the example, now let's try that method.
- b. In what ways does your work match the model?
- c. Show me what part you can do.
- d. Let's start here and see if you can do it.

5. Provide part of a response.

- a. What if we put _____ here, then do you see what comes next?
- b. I'll do this part, then you finish.
- c. What part do you want help with?

6. Model the response and provide another opportunity.

- a. Watch carefully while I do this. You think about why I am doing it this way and explain what parts you can when I finish.

- b. Are you ready to do this on your own?
- c. What part can I help you with?

Cognitive Feedback

1. Give COGNITIVE feedback – what thinking skills did they use?
2. Relate comments to the task – not the child – “That was a good choice, Darcy, because you drew a picture to show how to do it.”
3. Praise without cognitive feedback teaches nothing.
4. If they can discover how and why it is correct, they can then generalize their learning to other situations.

Good Questions to Ask

As children grow and develop you will be able to ask them more and more questions. Even a four month old infant can detect the change in your voice as it goes up at the end. Provide children the time to consider answers to your questions. Give them WAIT TIME before asking the question again, rewording it, or rescuing by providing an answer. You may be surprised at what you hear! When parents come to MindCAP workshops, we often discuss how rushed and busy most days feel. It seems parents spend most of their time giving directions and hurrying children along. There are certainly many situations when we just need our children to obey and there is not time to hold a discussion. If, however, you want to develop your child’s ability to be a better thinker, then consider finding a few moments every day to use questions like the ones listed below and give them time to think.

Try using the first three questions as much as possible.

- 1. What do you see?**
- 2. What is the problem?**
- 3. What is your plan?**
4. When have you done something like this before?
5. Yes, that’s right, but how did you know it was right?
6. When is another time you needed to....?
7. Can you think of another way we could do this?
8. Why is this one better than that one?
9. How can you find out?
10. How is..... different (like).....?