



Cultivating Child Development Series

Cognitive Development

Cognition refers to all the mental activities related to children's ability to learn, think and solve problems.

Why is it important to cultivate children's cognitive development?

- While children are receiving cognitive stimulation, they will acquire new knowledge and abilities at the same time, such as enhancing memory capacity and increase in understanding on the surrounding environment.
- When children are thinking through the questions and challenges raised by parents, it will help them to develop the problem solving skill. Using their own imagination and creativity, they may come up with ways and solutions that parents have never thought of.
- When children continue to think creatively, it will help to improve their mode of thinking.
- When children continue to solve problems by themselves or acquire new skills, they will become more independent and mature and be more able to cope with the tasks and responsibilities given by parents.



How to cultivate children's cognitive development?

- Children, aged between three to four years old, are full of curiosity. They are keen to explore and learn. In addition to love and care, reasonable restrictions and discipline, children also need parents' guidance and encouragement to develop and practice new abilities. Children at this stage usually spend a lot of time to explore the things around them, and keep asking questions out of curiosity. However, as their abstract and logical reasoning has not yet been fully developed, parents should answer their questions with simple and concrete answers. Moreover, it is understanding that parents do not always have an answer to all the questions. Parents can invite their children to find the answers together. Not only will this help to improve children's knowledge, but will also teach them how to learn.
- For children aged four to six, it is important for them to develop appropriate social skills and emotional management skills. Children need to test their abilities and decisions they have made, in order to enhance self-confidence and problem-solving skills. Try to provide him with different learning environments; understand his needs while he was learning to be independent and show him your love, support and encouragement. Even if you think he is challenging you or violating the rules you have set with him, try to remain calm and give him firm discipline and clear guidance.

What you can do:

- Spare time to talk with your child daily.
- When chatting with your child, listen with patience to what he wants to say; show your encouragement with nodding and smiling when necessary.
- Answer his questions and ask him questions back in order to promote his learning and language development.
- Help him to express his emotions and needs in words.



- Read with your child daily discuss the behaviours and feelings of the characters in the story with him, and tell your child which behaviour you admire or disagree.
- Teach him new vocabulary and add words to his speech to enrich his vocabulary and lengthen the sentences he speaks.
- Use some daily examples to teach him abstract concepts, such as size, colour and number concepts, etc.
- Encourage him to be independent.
- Let children do simple housework that he is capable of.
- Let children make simple choices.
- Let him play with other children or adults.
- Engage in role-playing games with your child and let him take the lead.
- Encourage your child to exercise every day to build up his physique, and to him vent his energy.
- Bring children to different places, such as parks, playgrounds, zoos, libraries, museums, etc., let him explore and learn.

Toys you can choose:

- Toys that can be used to play pretend games, such as mini tea sets, doll houses, toy cars and garages, animal toys, robots, dolls, etc.
- Household items or toys that allow children to be creative, such as building blocks and clay
- Colour pens, paints and other craft materials
- Puzzle



- Videos on songs and stories
- Books which are colourful and with pictures as illustration
- Table games which can help children to practice taking turns and following rules (for nearly 6-year-old child)
- Educational interactive computer software (for children around 6-year-old).

References and further reading:

1. Family Health Service: Understanding Your Child's Development - For Parents of Preschool Children
https://www.fhs.gov.hk/english/health_info/child/14821.html
2. Child Assessment Service: Parenting Channel
https://www.dhcas.gov.hk/en/parenting_channel.html



Child Assessment Service, Department of Health
Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government

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