

Learning How to Learn

by Diane Trautman

Have you every stopped to think about how you learn? Do you enjoy reading and creating lists and schedules to organize your day? Do you love taking things apart and putting them back together or learning new dance steps? Can you recall the details of a lecture long after it's over or easily recite dialog from your favorite movies?

When I was growing up, there wasn't much discussion about learning styles. If a child understood a lesson, she was considered smart and if she didn't, she was labelled lazy and perhaps even stupid. Bright kids "got it" and everyone else had better learn a good trade.

Thankfully, we have since developed a greater understanding of how children best receive and process information. Committed teachers and tutors incorporate that knowledge into their lessons, using various techniques to convey the concepts in a given subject rather than insisting that everyone adapt to their style of instruction.

One of the best parenting books I've read over the years is titled "How Your Child Is Smart: A Life-Changing Approach to Learning", by Dawna Markova, Ph.D. with Anne R. Powell. The author describes the characteristics of auditory, visual and kinesthetic learners and the various combinations of these styles. She also gives us specific suggestions for working with our children to support their education based on that information. With this newfound understanding of your child's capabilities and a corresponding insight into your own learning style, you can also improve communications and your relationship with your child.

Parents and their children frequently find themselves engaged in combat over school studies. We parents can reduce the friction and demonstrate respect for our children by learning how our children learn and then advocating for education that recongizes their style and acknowledges their talents.