


**Opening and Closing the Pathways to Learning**

The Role of Emotion in the Learning Processes

*Learning About Learning*  
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**How does emotion affect learning?**

- ❖ The limbic system - the emotional brain – contains amygdala, to filter important/unimportant sensory info and hippocampus, converts objective versions of events from STM to LTM
  - Emotion is the on/off switch for learning
  - Allows/disallows access to learning, memory and ability to make connections
- ❖ Intellectual energies drained by excessive emotion – negative and even sometimes positive
- ❖ Three areas affected: memory, attention, and perseverance

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**The effects of negative emotion on **memory****

- ❖ Anxiety the enemy of memory
- ❖ Disorganization
  - Information doesn't get stored properly
  - Difficult to retrieve effectively
- ❖ Associative tasks become cognitive – what you used to do automatically you now have to think consciously about doing
- ❖ Slows processing speed

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 The effects of positive emotion on **memory**

- Makes learning more episodic (events that happen) instead of just semantic (academic knowledge without personal experience)
- A personal investment in the experience will remember more detail
- Positive emotion and the senses
- Allows brain to make novel connections

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 The effects of negative emotion on **attention**

- Makes it difficult to filter our unnecessary information/stimuli – paying attention to what?
- Hard to judge the importance of information
- Difficult to concentrate on deeper levels
- Negative emotion may cause student to pace learning too slowly or too quickly – either of which lessens attention

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 The effects of positive emotion on **attention**

- Attends easily to what is pleasing
- Sparks curiosity
- Sustains attention easier
- “Healthy” stress is energizing
- Excitement with others toward a common goal (as on a team)

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**The effects of negative emotion on *perseverance***

- Difficulty experiencing success
  - Experiencing joy, satisfaction
  - Pessimism
- Negative emotion saps energy
  - Sarcasm and Cynicism
  - Fear
- Reactions to failure more impacting
  - First response to confusion/difficulty is anger
  - Not up for the struggle

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**The effects of positive emotion on *perseverance***

- Healthy risk taking
- Positive emotion is energizing
- Reactions to failure less impacting
  - More likely to learn from experience
  - Mistakes become useful information
- Interpersonal skills strengthened
  - People motivate people

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**Red flags to watch for regarding emotional health**

- Extreme irritability or other manifestations of stress
- Biting fingernails, pulling hair, picking
- Withdrawal from activities and family or friends
- Restless behavior
- Trouble concentrating
- Weight loss or gain
- A noticeable drop in grades
- Fatigue, loss of energy/interest or unusual vagueness
- Trouble falling asleep or staying asleep
- Extreme gaming or other escapist pastimes

*Note: These are only a concern when they are chronic, consistent, and disruptive to their lives.*

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 **Teaching children to manage their own emotions**

- ⦿ Increase the amount of connectedness in your child's life
- ⦿ Eat dinner together as a family and talk purposefully at the dinner table
- ⦿ Have clear boundaries at home - know the rules and be sure everyone else knows them, too
- ⦿ Be sure your child **sleeps** well, **eats** well and gets **exercise**
- ⦿ Get rid of words like "stupid", "perfect", and "smart" and stress multiple ways of being capable
- ⦿ Use the language of the growth mindset - Value the learning process (the growth) and not just the outcome
- ⦿ Let them pursue interests that are out of the mainstream and/or are different from those of their siblings

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 **Teaching children to manage their own emotions**

- ⦿ Applaud and encourage questions
- ⦿ Unlink fear and learning
  - Never try to use fear or intimidation as a motivator
- ⦿ Read aloud to your children and learn with them
- ⦿ Eliminate sarcasm and cynicism, especially about school
- ⦿ Use music in your house - to sooth, to energize, to transition
- ⦿ Make sure they know it is safe to fail - learning from mistakes
- ⦿ Help your children name feelings - help them know that feelings pass
- ⦿ Help them recognize their need for alone time.
- ⦿ Pray with them for wisdom in learning - and discernment about their emotions

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 **Recommended Reading**

- ⦿ *Raising Emotionally Intelligent Children* by J. Gottman, J. DeClaire, and D. Goleman
- ⦿ *Raising Resilient Children* by R. Brooks
- ⦿ *The Way They Learn* by C. Tobias
- ⦿ *Wild Things* by D. Thomas
- ⦿ *Raising Girls* by S. Goff and M. Trevathan
- ⦿ *Modern Parents Vintage Values* by S. Goff, D. Thomas, and M. Trevathan
- ⦿ *Love and Logic* book series by F. Cline and J. Faye

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