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Learning for Life

FOR THE FRIDGE

By Karen Sampson, MA

WHEN I WAS A YOUNG STUDENT our teachers began using a revolutionary phrase—lifelong learning. The old idea that adults were past the age of learning (the axiom that you can't teach an "old dog" new tricks) was rapidly being debunked. Awareness that learning stretches across a person's lifetime was growing, and we were taught to teach ourselves as a skill for adulthood. AD/HD is not a barrier to becoming a lifelong learner. Instead, it inspires the need to think creatively in order to get the disorder out of the way of being a successful learner at any age.

Learning in the early years

Helping your preschooler or elementary student can be a challenge.

- Create a learning space in your home. Keep resources nearby, including craft paper, pens, crayons, books, and notepads.
- Break lessons or assignments into "chunks" and have rewards for completing the task—a few minutes to get up and move around, ride a bike, or have a small, healthy snack.



- Help your young student by reviewing her assignments and textbooks. Often she will need you to explain a concept in a way that may be different from how it was presented in class.
- Some young students have higher attention and comprehension levels if they can move around while memorizing or handle small toys or modeling clay. "Fidgeting to focus" helps the brain engage in a task.

Learning in adolescence

Your scholar reaches a point when learning becomes more self-directed.

- Help your teen create her own learning space and be open to her creativ-

ity when her idea of a learning space differs from your own. Some teens study better stretched across the floor or on the bed than seated at a table.

- Keep extra stimuli to a minimum. Your teen may study better with some music, but avoid TV or video games while doing school work.
- Let your teen explain his school work to you in order to get an idea of his comprehension. Asking questions about how he reached his conclusion or what he thinks about the material helps him explore the information from more than one angle.
- Grades are important, but so is your teen's developing emotional life. Help him explore thoughts and feelings that might be getting in the way of studying his subjects. Help him choose appropriate extracurricular activities and social outlets while balancing school work.

Learning as a young adult

Young adults cope with unique challenges; learning continues in new ways.

- Everyone has a first job. Take a deep breath and don't be afraid to ask a more experienced coworker for help. Take notes and say thank you.
- Schedule time in a relaxed environment where you can review company procedures or the new technologies you are learning.
- Plan time to read whatever it is you enjoy. Making reading a habit is an important skill for lifelong learning.
- Recognize that you will make mistakes at work and at home, and understand that they are part of the learning experience. Treat failures as lessons, too, that might require independent study.

Learning as an adult

Adults are active learners who relate new information to ideas, experiences, and skills they have already acquired. Make connections with what you already know, and recognize how the new information or skill benefits you where you are in life.

- We learn more from novelty than rote memorization. Explore new ideas, hobbies, and skills.
- Participate in discussions that explore more than one idea. Seek varied sources of news and information, including online, television, books, and newspapers.
- Knowing your goals, personally and professionally, will help you find avenues of learning that intrigue you.
- Tour historic and cultural sites, and ask questions. Take time to research before and after trips.

Learning as a senior adult

Many seniors have time to go back to school full- or part-time, or to take community classes focusing on areas of personal interest. When mobility is a concern, reach out to the online learning world.

- Look into teaching at the local college, through the school district's continuing education program, or at a community center.
- Audit classes at a local college. You may not need the credits, but the chance to be a student again can be a great experience.
- Become a docent at a local cultural or historic center.
- Offer to study with a grandchild. This is a gift of learning for both learners. **A**

