Understanding how your child learns can help you understand the tools they need to help with the development of the skills and strategies to build their mental health toolbox. Here is and article to support you in your parenting journey.

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**Learning Styles**

**Children’s Learning Styles**

Learning styles is a term that refers to different ways in which we learn, process, and retain information. All young children learn through meaningful hands-on experiences—through touching, doing, and moving. And children also learn through seeing and hearing. As you observe your child, you will begin to identify strengths and preferences that tell you something about your child’s preferred learning style.

You want to foster your child’s strengths, but remember that it helps to challenge him to grow as well. Your child can excel in a variety of areas. Therefore, offer a variety of experiences to help your child develop new strengths and interests that will broaden his or her understanding of the world.

**Types of Learning Styles**

These are the four main types of learning styles:

* **Visual** (learn through seeing)
* **Auditory** (learn through hearing)
* **Tactile** (learn through touch)
* **Kinesthetic** (learn through doing and moving)

**Visual learners**learn through seeing. Children who are visual processors tend to observe a parent’s or teacher’s body language and facial expressions for content and learn through demonstrations and descriptions. They tend to have well-developed imaginations and often think in pictures. Too much movement or action in a classroom may cause distraction for them. For older children who read, written instructions may help clarify verbal directions.

**Auditory learners**learn through listening. Children who are auditory processors learn through participating in discussions and talking things through. Verbal directions may help clarify instructions or written information. Too much noise may be distracting and children with this strength may learn best in a quiet environment.

**Tactile learners**learn through touch. Children who are more tactile prefer activities or projects that allow them to use their hands. Your child may prefer doodling or drawing to aid memory.

**Kinesthetic learners**learn through moving and doing. Children who are more kinesthetic learn through physical sensations and may have trouble sitting still for long periods. A hands-on approach that allows your child to actively explore her physical world helps her learn best.

**How Can You *Determine* Your Child’s Learning Style?**

The best way to learn about your child’s learning style is to observe what he or she is doing. Actions, interests, and preferences will provide information about how he or she is processing information.

If your child has developmental delays, you may find that you often focus on what your child isn’t yet doing. Instead, try to focus on his strengths and favorite activities. All children, even the most challenged, have interests and preferences. Identifying these helps increase a child’s motivation for learning.

Speak with family members and your child’s team to develop an inventory of toys, objects, and activities that are meaningful for your child. Ask yourself questions like these:

* What types of toys does she prefer? Does she prefer quiet activities or lots of movement?
* Does he like to read books and draw pictures? Does he prefer to be shown how to do something rather than being told verbally?
* Is she active? Does she like to move and participate in more active activities?
* Is he drawn to numbers and patterns?

**How Can You *Support*Your Child’s Learning Style?**

Parents and teachers have a tremendous influence on children. Understanding how a child learns can improve how we teach them. Early childhood programs are often organized in a way that supports the range of children’s strengths and needs.

This includes having:

* Adequate periods for movement
* Group circle and music time
* Learning centers in the classroom that include a myriad of experiences (for example, reading corner, block area, manipulatives/fine motor area, outdoor play, and art)

This supports participation of children with a wide range of learning styles, while also exposing children to experiences they may not typically seek out.

As adults, we can help children better understand their strengths and individual differences, while supporting challenges. You can seek out real-world experiences that extend your child’s learning. For example, if your child is interested in fish and aquatic life, visit an aquarium. Your child will retain more information and develop a broader understanding of the world if information is meaningful and presented in a way that meets his or her individual learning style.

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