

Visit With the Utays

March 2007

School Psychology and Education Specialists



Dr. **Joe Utay**, Director of Counseling and Evaluation Services for Total Learning Centers and former professor for Indiana University of Pennsylvania's Department of Counseling, is a graduate of University of Pittsburgh, a school psychologist, marriage and family therapist, author, national speaker, and father. **Dr. Carol Utay** is Executive Director of Total Learning Centers. She is also a graduate of University of Pittsburgh, an expert in learning and special education. "Dr. Carol" has experience as a principal, Orton-Gillingham reading therapist, teacher, consultant, national speaker, professor, author, and mother. She is a national 2006 Athena Award winner for community service. They live and work in the North Hills with their daughter Andrea.

Another Memory Key: "Once more with feeling!"

Actress Jacqueline Bisset once reminisced, "A Latin teacher told me I might make a good actress, and that stuck in my memory." Why do some memories stick with you a lifetime while others wither on the vine of an unused synapse? Why can you remember someone's name you knew 10 years ago but instantly forget the name of the person who introduced herself 3 seconds ago? Understanding the nature of memory and using that knowledge to help children improve it has been the focus of our columns the past several months. This month we share a very powerful technique: if you link a feeling to a fact you need to memorize, then remembering the feeling will help you remember the fact. As with many memory techniques, though it takes some extra time initially, the overall study time, and more importantly ease in remembering the fact later, is greatly enhanced.

Let's say your child is having trouble memorizing the definition of "cooperate." First, you ask him for an example of when he works with someone else on a project, game, goal, etc. He describes making a goal with the help of a teammate in his favorite sport. Second, you ask him to think about what it FEELS like when working with a teammate to make a goal and he responds, "Exciting." You now have an emotional link to the definition and can move on to step three: "So, when you work together to make a goal, you cooperate with your teammate." All that's left is tying it all up in a neat package for him to tuck away for future reference: "So, when defining the word 'cooperate,' remember how exciting it is to work together for a goal." Check later

that when asked to define "cooperate," he says something like, "To COOPERATE is EXCITING like when I cooperate with a teammate to make a goal. To cooperate means WORKING TOGETHER FOR A GOAL." Success!

All children have feelings like diamonds just waiting to be mined. Help your child use their own strong feelings to link to what they need to memorize. As we've written about before, besides memory boosters described in our most recent columns, a different approach is to strengthen the "memory muscle" directly through a series of fun challenging brain exercises. Total Learning Centers offer such a program which is quite effective for improving memory, thinking speed, attention, and other aspects of what scientists refer to as the executive functioning of the brain. So as always, if needed, you have a great community resource to help your child prepare today for success tomorrow.

For more information about this or any other topic related to your child's success, including professional assessment of strengths and needs, contact Total Learning Centers at 724-940-1090 (Wexford, Fox Chapel, and Murrysville areas).

Reprinted from Northern Connections March 2007.