

## **Dialogue with a Parent from Pakistan**

Wednesday, April 7, 2010, 2:12 AM

Hello,

I am Umm Muaz from Pakistan and am in the process of setting up a website for the home education community in my country. I would like to add your article "The case against time out" as this technique has recently been employed by parents and hailed as beneficial. Could I kindly have permission to do so?

Wednesday, April 7, 2010, 9:33 PM

Umm,

What is your web site about? What is its purpose? Whom do you wish to serve? You need not answer any of those questions, of course. However, I would like to facilitate your achieving your goals. If there are other articles of mine on my site that you believe might interest your readers, please feel free to use them. You need, of course, only acknowledge my authorship. Are you an educator or psychologist?

Best regards, Peter

Thursday, April 8, 2010, 1:26 AM

Peter, here are answers to your question:

### **What is your web site about?**

The website will be the cyberspace location of our organisation: HOMEWORKS, which is a support and resource group for home education

### **What is its purpose?**

the website will provide:

- a. resources for home schooling families
- b. support to the above (home education is violently opposed in Pakistan)
- c. a platform to interact and coordinate activities for the above
- d. promote correct information about home education (highly misunderstood in our country).
- e. clarify misconceptions
- f. answer FAQs

### **Whom do you wish to serve?**

- a. families who are home educating
- b. those who are inclined towards homeschooling but do not have enough resources and conviction to take the plunge.
- c. those who are questioning the school system and are looking for alternatives.

### **Are you an educator or psychologist?**

I am a mother by choice, a graphic designer by profession and part of two amazing families (mine and my in-laws).

Regards,Umm

Thursday, April 8, 2010, 9:18 PM

Umm,

We home schooled our two sons. I received my Ph.D. in educational psychology specializing in how people at different stages of development learn. That was decades before I was married and had children. However, as a product of schools in the United States, I sensed they were not doing what they should be doing. And I also knew the children and adolescents were unjustly being blamed for the failures of the academic system. I wanted to learn about learning, so I studied it in graduate school. I came away with the empirically supported idea that a competent educator should first begin by finding out the intrinsic interests of his/her students. Then, whatever skill or subject matter needed to be learned should be woven around those intrinsic interests of the student or group of students. (There is more to it than that. But that is the key starting point.)

I taught how to do this as a teacher educator of prospective preschool teachers and secondary school teachers. When I was a high school teacher, the very saddest thing I witnessed was the destruction of the motivation to learn in many students. These students were brought into classrooms, seated in rows, taught to sit still, made to be silent, and then didactically taught by their teacher.

Umm, as you probably know the shelves of university libraries are filled with years of well-conducted research studies that demonstrate over and over again that learning is best if it is an active, not a passive processes; that children and adolescents should be engaged and interested in their learning and have a say in what and how they learn. When I became a parent, the vast majority of schools still had not changed in this country. Dare I watch the withering and death of the motivation to learn in my own two sons? That, with all good conscience, I could not do.

Umm, your website will be of great service if it can provide your readers with the best knowledge about learning we have to date. Again, I wish you well. It is a great pleasure for me to be in contact with you.

Sincerely, Peter Ernest Haiman, Ph.D.

Date: Saturday, April 10, 2010, 4:39 AM

Thank you so much for your guidance and tips. I have been reading your articles and finding them helpful. My son is 6 months old. He usually has company as we live in a joint family system. But when he is with me, I sometimes wonder what kind of things I should be doing with him to nurture his inherent curiosity. I do not want to over entertain him and make him over dependent on people / confused.

We plan to home educate him, God willing. I would like to know what method you employed for your sons. I am in the process of research but I am inclined towards unschooling. A little scared to be honest. Advice?

Thanks,  
Umm

Saturday, April 10, 2010, 5:44 PM  
Umm,

What you should be doing is learning about the attachment research and how it is related to brain growth (especially right brain growth) in the first two years of life. The quality of attachment you make with your child is not only directly related to brain growth, it is also related to your child's emotional, intellectual and social development. Research has now identified four kinds of attachment: secure; insecure-resistant; insecure-avoidant; and a relatively new type called Type D, an insecure-disorganized/disoriented pattern.

Of course, what you want for your child is for him/her to develop a secure attachment. This is done when you or another primary caregiver has frequent, close interaction with the child and you learn to read each other's signals and respond promptly and appropriately. Then the child learns trust in the primary caregiver. These experiences also promote right brain growth. This area of the brain houses the neurons capable of emotional self-regulation. Although the human brain is physically growing until roughly age 24 or 25 years, the above physical growth, for the most part, takes place by age three. These developments, mentioned above, last throughout life.

Now, you asked what kinds of things you should be doing with him. You should be watching him. What does he show an interest in? If he shows an interest in a bird up in a tree, get him a book with pictures of birds. Get him toy birds he can hold and play with. In this way you are watching for his intrinsic interests and appropriately responding to them. If you do this consistently, he will learn he can trust that you are really there for him. And his right brain will grow as well. Do you see how it works?

Your son is 6 months old. He is in what Piaget called the sensory-motor stage of cognitive development. This means he will learn mostly by touching, mouthing, hearing, looking, and tasting. Have three groups of toys that you rotate from time to time, based on your son's demonstrated expression of boredom with them. Place one of the groups in a safe place on the floor in your child's room or an activity room. Place the other two groups in two boxes (one per box). Each group of toys should have 5 or 6 toys in it. The toys should be of different colors and textures and challenge different fine motor skills, like pushing (cars), putting on top of each other (blocks), opening and closing (books), shaking with bells (rattles), etc. Note which toys interest your son and which do not. Like the example of the bird, above, when your son shows more of an interest in one or two toys than the others that are out on the floor, go and find some other toys like the ones he has expressed an interest in.

Your goal as a home educator is always to extend and elaborate the intrinsic interests of your child. This is the key!!! The purpose of the two other boxes is to have very different toys in

them. Then you can rotate the toys for your child when he seems bored with the toys that are currently on the floor. I hope the above is helpful. Please feel free to ask me other questions.  
Best regards, Peter

Sunday, April 11, 2010, 8:42 PM

Umm,

I just reread your question and my answer to it. There is no "method" for educating all children. Each child is different from other children—even though they each are from the same social class, are the same religion, and the same age. Each child is unique. The key, again, is finding out what your individual child is interested in and then extending and elaborating and enriching that interest. Your child's interests will and should change from time to time. As a parent, you should be watching your young child to observe these changes. When you child shows a new interest, introduce play activities that captivate your son's interest. Watch how he responds when you present an activity. Does he go to it? Does he show disinterest? Does he seem overwhelmed? His response will tell you and be your best guide. His response is your "method" evaluator. His response will tell you if you are overwhelming him, or if he is still interested, or if he may be tired, or if he may be hungry.

A child's response can tell many things to an observant parent. This allows the parent to "listen" to their child's needs and responsively and sensitively care for their child. In my last email to you, I did not stress as much as I had wished one important fact: learning is active! Children learn by doing. What kinds of things do you think they learn?

Best regards. Peter

Sunday, April 11, 2010, 11:33 PM

That was a GREAT help. I'm going to print this out, read it and work on it. If you don't mind, can I please share this (online or personally) with other parents?

Thanks a lot. Really appreciate it.

Umm

Monday, April 12, 2010, 9:54 AM

Umm,

Of course you can!! The more we can spread information about children and child rearing that is empirically based, the healthier it will be for our families and our societies, and the more chance that there will be peace in the world. Anger in families and war between societies is caused, to a very great extent, when the young have been raised by parents who, although they may love their children, do not know how properly to raise them. These parents raise their children as they were raised. These parents do not take the time to learn about the most important job a human being has: the rearing of a child.

Umm, may I put our emails on my website for others to read? Your questions reflect the hearts and minds of so many mothers. Yet they have no one to ask them to. In my answers to your questions, I have been also answering theirs. I would like to call the article something like "A dialogue with parents in Pakistan."

Please let me know. Peter

Wednesday, April 14, 2010, 10:56 PM

I am sorry for not replying earlier as I was discussing it with my husband. We are comfortable with you posting the dialogue.

Here is my next question: Our son gets very excited with book reading. Before he could move his arms and legs, he would look at the books with rapt attention. But now he grabs the book and puts it in his mouth. We are hesitant to now read from paper books as some of them have bent and slightly ripped.

Should we just stick to cloth/indestructible books?

Thursday, April 15, 2010, 9:42 AM

Umm,

The first question we must ask is: why your son is placing the book in his mouth? What reason or reasons cause him to do that? When we, as adults, begin by asking this question, we give ourselves an opportunity to think rationally and problem solve from an understanding of what the research says about child growth and development. This reduces the stress in the child's life. It reduces the stress in the parent's life. And it actually can enhance development, especially when a child is young.

Recall what I wrote about sensory motor learning in a previous email. Good parenting requires the development of good diagnostic skills. By that I mean, good parents can competently determine the cause(s) of the behavior of their child and then promptly and sensitively act to fulfill the underlying need or needs the behavior reflected. This is the same thing a medical doctor does. A patient comes in with symptoms. The doctor carefully looks at all the symptoms to diagnose the cause of the physical illness. Then the doctor treats the causes, not the symptoms. Oh, the doctor may give some temporary symptomatic relief, yes. But that is not the doctor's goal at all. The doctor would be a failure if it were. The goal is to find and treat the causes of the symptoms. This is what a good parent does, as well.

I will stop here for now. May I suggest that you get a hold of "Childhood and Society," second edition, by Erik Erikson, published (1963) by W.W. Norton & Co. Familiarize yourself with his Eight Ages of Man. Over the years, they have held up very well, and have been supported by the research—especially the early years. I hope the above has helped.

Sincerely, Peter Ernest Haiman, Ph. D.