

My Doctor Next Door A Healthy Mind Needs a Lifetime of Learning

By K. J. Armann, M.D.

Have you ever had the joy of an infant smiling back at you when you smiled at him or her? Or seen the excitement of the infant who just put one block on top of another? If you have, then you have seen firsthand the beginnings of learning. We start out as sponges for knowledge and it can continue until our end. All this back to school stuff has gotten me to think, "What should we be doing to continue to learn every-day of our lives, not just in school?"

Research has shown us when we continue to learn, we are healthier, more self-confident, happier and resilient. Learning makes up a lot of our wellbeing and keeps us curious, engaged, and gives us a sense of accomplishment.

There are many ways in which we can stay actively learning, both in and out of school. As children and adolescents we are required to get a certain amount of education. That education is evolving as we learn more about how the mind works. So what can we do to stimulate more learning in our children? It has to be a fun activity that sounds exciting and engaging. Most children will want to participate when their parents or other adults, like their grandparents, are motivated to do the activity with them. For example, when was the last time you flew a kite, or built a kite? This is a great activity to do with a child or just for yourself.

For a lifetime of learning we need to continually try new things, like acquiring a new language or taking up an instru-



ment. Try being a mentor or a teacher. Once you have learned a new skill, teach it to others. We can learn so much from others when we are teaching and helping them learn new skills. Social media and computers are very much a part of the new learning curve. Skills such as email and programming are new to many in our society. It is fun to show others how to do these things. My mother is eighty-five years old and in teaching her how to use the computer, I have gained so much from the questions she has asked. At the office, I frequently get asked medical questions and sometimes I don't have the answers. I love the challenge of research-

ing to answer these questions.

There are many methods to assist us in our learning. Active learning is learning by doing. It is an instructional method that gets students involved in the learning process. To learn creatively is to imagine, create, play or implement, share what we have learned, reflect on the newly learned and start again with imagine. This is a concept that has been used very successfully in kindergarten. These tools are great for getting involved with our own learning process or with a group.

Wikipedia is an online encyclopedia that can be very helpful. Even our grandparents had encyclopedias that they used as a reference or to learn about something new. The difference is that the online encyclopedias are constantly being updated and it is free.

Finally, for me, my newest learning tool is writing and I am enjoying the challenge.

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