

Teaching Guide
Don't Miss Discovery Point

Goals

1. Learn how to encourage your children to love learning.
2. Identify specific ways to nurture your children's love of learning, creativity, and imagination.
3. Make a plan to encourage your children to love learning.

Preparation:

Provide a Discovery Point Travel Guide for each participant.

Study the Teaching Guide and Travel Guide. Consider stories you might share.

Make copies of the evaluation at the end of this Teaching Guide.

Introduction:

Each unit in the Parenting Journey can form a 30–90 minute lesson. This guide will provide you specific ideas for teaching Discovery Point.

Welcome

Welcome to Discovery Point along the Parenting Journey

[Give any necessary instructions for housekeeping tasks. You might add a get-acquainted activity if you have the time and you want to build the relationships among your participants. Look for icebreaker activity ideas at www.cyfernet.org.]

Start by Stating the Main Idea:

Some people skip past Discovery Point. They don't take time to make learning and sharing an important part of their family culture. They don't help children become enthusiastic learners. The effort invested at Discovery Point can make a lifelong difference for you and your children.

Points of interest

1. Give Choices

We all like to have choices. Children are no different. They enjoy having choices and learn from making their own decisions. They discover good ways to be responsible when we let them make choices.

As adults, we sometimes try to force children to do things our way. This doesn't work very well. For example, we may want our children to do something more active than watching television. We all know what will happen if we command them to turn off the TV and go outside. They will protest. Instead, we can give them a choice: "It is time to turn off the TV. Would you like to go outside and play or stay inside and read a book?" We are happy when they make a choice that does not involve television.

Another example of giving choices is getting children to clean their rooms. We can yell at them or threaten them, but this will probably just make them mad. We would have better results if we gave them choices.

For instance, we might ask a child if she wants to play music on the radio while cleaning her room or have it quiet. We might even ask the child if she would rather get the room cleaned up right now or wait until after dinner. However, if the child decides to clean the room after dinner, we need to be sure that she doesn't watch TV or play with friends until the room is clean.

What are some other examples of choices you might allow your child to make?

Wise parents set limits on choices. We allow young children to decide which shirt they want to wear to school, but we set limits on bedtimes. We allow teens to go out with their friends, but we ask them to be home by a certain time.

Many things should be decided by the child. In matters of style, it is better not to start a battle. You may think your child's hair is too long or too short or that baggy pants look ridiculous. Our parents probably had some of the same concerns about our style! Allow the child freedom to express herself or himself in areas that are not unsafe or immoral. Do not panic when some of those choices are different from ones we make.

[Tell a humorous story about how your child has expressed him or herself through their choice of style, or ask participants to share a story.]

Sometimes, we allow children to make bigger choices after they have shown that they are wise in making small choices. For example, a teen who wants to be trusted to go with friends to a concert needs to have demonstrated responsibility about making good choices. A parent may need to say occasionally, "I think I will be ready to trust you with going to the concert when you have shown that I can trust you to come home on time." Because trust is earned over time, a 14-year-old will probably not be allowed the same freedom as a 17-year-old.

2. Learn from mistakes.

All of us make lots of mistakes. Sometimes, our children's mistakes bother us because they seem silly. It can help to remember that we were once children and also made mistakes. We should allow children to be children.

If we get angry when children make mistakes, they may learn to be afraid of trying anything. That is why we should react to mistakes with calm problem-solving and gentle teaching.

For example, when a child spills her milk, we simply say, "The milk spilled. Here is a cloth to wipe it up." That is problem solving. Later, when the child is feeling peaceful, we can help her think about where to place her cup to avoid spills. That is gentle teaching.

Imagine your teenager has an accident with the car. Calm problem-solving involves being sure everyone is feeling safe and peaceful. When everyone is feeling peaceful, the parent and child might call the insurance agent to arrange repairs. Gentle teaching might include asking the teen, "That was a terrible experience for you. What did you learn from it?"

As children get older, the most important teaching may happen when they start making sense of their experiences. We encourage them to learn from their experiences. This is better than lecturing or scolding.

[Share a story from your life of a time when your parents allowed you to make mistakes and then responded with teaching instead of punishing. Ask participants if they have any examples to share.]

We can help children grow into capable adults when we are willing to help them learn from the mistakes rather than punish them for making mistakes.

3. Encourage a love of learning.

A love of learning is one of the greatest gifts any parent can give a child. There are simple things parents can do to help children develop a love of learning and a love of reading.

There are even things we can do to help babies love to learn. When a child experiments with sounds and words, we can repeat them back. Also, we can play peek-a-boo and laugh with the child. When a child is tired, we should let them rest. When a child wants to play, we need to play with them in a way that is enjoyable for them. Our sensitive response to them teaches them to interact with us.

We can also fill our lives with learning. We can read, ask questions about new ideas and check books out of the library for us and our children. Also, we talk about the things we are learning.

How do you show your children that you love to learn?

We can make reading fun for our children. We can let our children select books from the library. We can read to them regularly.

We should make an adventure out of reading. When we read to them, we can bring excitement and fun to the story. When a child wants to linger on a page, we can take time to talk about it. We can name the characters on the page of an illustrated story and invite the children to point to them. If we turn reading into a chore, children will resist it. If we make reading fun, they will seek it.

We can make learning an adventure. Maybe once a week, we can make an outing with our children to an interesting place such as a museum, historic site, a business or any place that is new and interesting. For example, visiting a site where a new house is being

built and asking the contractors or craftspeople to tell about their work can open children's minds to new ways to use their talents. Be sure to have safety in mind.

How have you made reading and learning fun for your children?

We also show our appreciation for learning when we make a place in our homes for books, bookshelves and other learning materials. The child who grows up seeing and experiencing the adventure of learning is likely to become a lifelong learner.

Plan your stay.

[These questions could be answered by each participant directly on their Discovery Point Travel Guide.]

After you have discussed the three main ideas in Discovery Point, think about the things you have learned. Here are some ideas for encouraging your children to love learning:

Be an enthusiastic learner yourself! Take an interest in your children's discoveries. Make a regular practice of sharing the things you learn with each other. Visit interesting people and places. Make learning and exploring safe for your children. Help your children become good decision-makers.

Map out the details of your plan. What exactly do you plan to do? When will be the best time? Do you need to do anything to prepare the child to take part in your new plan? Do you need to do anything to prepare yourself? For example, do you need to imagine some of the problems that might arise and be prepared to calmly solve problems and gently teach?

Decide some small things you can do this week and write out your plan:

What you plan to do:

The best time to do this:

Ideas to prepare my child or family:

How I can prepare myself:

People who can help me:

Discovery Point is an important part of the parenting journey. We hope you will become an expert at discovery. You may want more ideas to learn the most at Discovery Point. If so, you might:

-Read ideas about family reading, setting limits, and giving children choices along with other Parenting Journey information at www.arfamilies.org.

-Look for a class in your area on story-telling, reading, learning, or problem-solving.

-Read a book about understanding children such as Haim Ginott's *Between Parent and Child*, or a book on helping children succeed at school like John Ban's *Parents Assuring Student Success*.

-Get ideas from another person who has inspired lifelong learning in his or her children.

-Get more ideas by going to the national extension family website, www.cyfernet.org, and searching on learning, school, problem-solving, or lifelong learning.

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United States Department of Agriculture, University of Arkansas, and County Governments Cooperating

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