Cognitive Development Essay, Research Paper

Cognitive development is very crucial in the development of a child. A friend of mine, Julie just recently had a perfect baby boy. Since Julie found out she was pregnant she has been reading book after book, each book that she has read talks about cognitive development, but never really explains what cognitive development is or how to improve ones development. Julie has asked me to help her to understand what she can do to give Hunter the best optimal cognitive development though out his life. I’m going to start by telling Julie exactly what cognitive development is, the four stages of cognitive development and what kinds of activities to do together as he gets older. I believe that this will help Hunter develop into a very smart child he most likely will be ahead of his classmate’s in school and will excel through out his life.

Cognitive development is the growth in children’s ways of thinking about and interacting with their environment. Young children initially learn about the world through active, physical exploration and then gradually develop the ability to think symbolically and logically about their experiences. Children are curious explorers, and their cognitive development involves learning new concepts and testing a variety of ideas.

A biologist, known as Piaget was interested in how an organism adapted to their environment, especially behavior adaptation to the environment. Piaget hypothesized that infants are born with schemes operating at birth that he called “reflexes.” However, in human beings an infant uses these reflexes to adapt to the environment, these reflexes are quickly replaced with constructed schemes. Piaget described two processes used by the individual in its attempt to adapt: assimilation and accommodation. Both of these processes are used though out life as the person increasingly adapts to the environment in a more complex manner. Assimilation is the process of using the environment so that it can be placed in cognitive structures. Accommodation is the process of changing cognitive structures in order to accept something from the environment. Both processes are used simultaneously and alternately throughout life. In his work Piaget identified the child’s four stages of mental growth. In the sensorimotor stage, occurring from birth to age 2, the child is concerned with gaining motor control and learning about physical objects. In the preoperational stage, from ages 2 to 7, the child is preoccupied with verbal skills. At this point the child can name objects and reason intuitively. In the concrete operational stage, from ages 7 to 12, the child begins to deal with abstract concepts such as numbers and relationships. Finally, in the formal operational stage, ages 12 to 15, the child begins to reason logically and systematically. All of these four stages are very important to the developmental growth of a child.

There are many exercises and games that you or your spouse can do with your child to improve the cognitive development of children. Smells: Infant Activity (up to 15 months) Save old spices containers with shaker tops and put a variety of “smelly” materials into these. Break up pieces of orange peel, save some whole cloves, soak a cotton ball in perfume, and break up some onion or garlic. Put each “smell” item in a separate container. Label each and talk about the type of smell. Be sure to name each object several times and encourage infants to try to vocalize sounds. Model smelling the different containers and encourage infants to try to smell each container. Let them explore the containers by touching and manipulating them.

“Oh, smell this one. This is an orange peel. It smells fruity!” “This perfume has a strong smell. Do you smell it? It smells like a flower.” “This is an onion. It has a really strong smell. It makes my eyes water.” This activity also helps children develop communication skills in receptive language and perceptual motor skills in eye-hand coordination. Buried Treasure: Toddler Activity (15 months to 3 years) Fill a large plastic tub with sand. Add shells, plastic eggs, wooden cubes, large plastic keys, and wooden animal figures. Provide a muffin tin to hold items after they are found. Let children take turns hunting through the sand to find the treasure and then place it in the muffin tin. Encourage children to put items that are the same in the same section of the muffin tin, e.g., same color, same shape, etc. This activity also helps children develop concept formation skills. Hide-and-seek Matching Game: Preschool Activity (3 to 5 year) Use index cards to make duplicate sets of cards with stickers, shapes, numerals, letters, or wallpaper designs. Ask children to hide their eyes while you place one set of the cards around the room. Cards should remain visible but in unusual places. Distribute the other set of cards to the children. Ask them to look around the room to find the card that matches their card. Encourage children to help each other. When all cards are found, hide them again and repeat the game as long as children are interested. Also let children hide the cards. This activity also helps children develop skills in concept formation and in social interaction and cooperation. These are just a few ideas that you could use to help you child and even his friends have fun and also learn, and develop cognitively with out even realizing they are learn while playing fun games.

As I have tried to convey though out this paper cognitive development is a very important factor in a child’s life. It is recommended that parents and teachers challenge the child’s abilities, but do not present material or information that is too far beyond the child’s level. As an infant’s cognitive development grows he knows how to use things to his advantage. His new smiles help to hold mother’s attention longer. He also learns that as mother moves slowly from one side of him to the other, he can move his eyes and head to sustain the interaction. However, if his mother moves out of sight and the baby loses her altogether because he does not yet have the ability to remember and reproduce her image in his mind. Either he will fuss because the schema that he was in is gone, or he will switch on another schema, such as comforting himself by thumb sucking. There is a process to this development that does take a long time to develop fully, but with the help of loved one you can help your child be successful and learn to engage in activities that are good for him and his cognitive learning process.

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