



St. Mina Coptic Orthodox Church
Pre-Service Training Seminars



Lecture 9:

*CHILD
PSHYCOLOGY*

**“For God is not the author of
confusion, but of peace”
(1 Corinthians 14:33)**



AGENDA



- ❖ Our role as teachers
- ❖ What is learning?
- ❖ Key factors in learning
- ❖ A child's learning stages
- ❖ Activity





Our roles as teachers



- ❖ Servants lay the foundation for a child's spiritual growth.
- ❖ You are a resource to the child and to the parents/caregivers.
- ❖ Your work is helping children take steps of faith—small and large.
- ❖ You are involved in helping children grow as Jesus did: ***“And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and men.”*** (Luke 2:52).
- ❖ Teaching children is a high calling; teaching children well is a great accomplishment .



Our roles as teachers (cont.)



- ❖ We, as servants, will have to focus on the spiritual lives of children—their relationship to God and their relationship with others and self.
- ❖ You are viewed as a role model to the children you serve. Make sure you act like one.
- ❖ Our mission is:
to teach the eternal truth of the gospel with methods that meet the developmental and spiritual needs of today's children.



What is learning?



- ❖ Learning is to gain knowledge, understanding, or skill.
- ❖ An even broader definition of learning is:
"any permanent change in behavior that occurs as a result of a practice or an experience."
- ❖ Learning then has a direct impact on behavior.
- ❖ This makes what we teach our children even more important as it has the potential to have a lasting affect in their behavior.



Key Factors in Learning



- ❖ A child rarely learns in isolation.
- ❖ Learning generally takes place in a setting of children within the same age group.
- ❖ Some factors that affect learning are:
 - motivation
 - peer relationships within the group
 - communication between the child and the teacher.
 - environment
 - physical setting
 - emotional atmosphere
 - social and cultural norms.





A child's learning stages



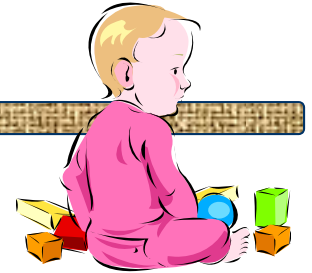
- ❖ A child's thought patterns are much different than that of an adult and can certainly be expressed in much different ways.
- ❖ There are four different stages of learning or development that each child goes through:
 - **SENSORIMOTOR PERIOD**
 - **PRE-OPERATIONAL PERIOD**
 - **CONCRETE OPERATIONS PERIOD**
 - **FORMAL OPERATIONS PERIOD**



1. SENSORIMOTOR PERIOD

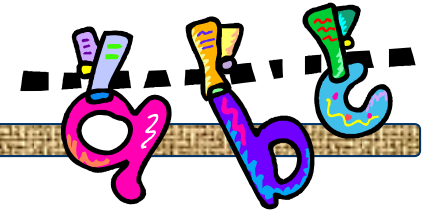


- ❖ From the ages of birth to about two years old.
- ❖ Primary mode of learning occurs through the five senses.
- ❖ He/she learns to experience environment (touches things, holds, looks, listens, tastes, feels, and bangs).
- ❖ the sense of time is now and the sense of space is here.
- ❖ When the child adds motor skills such as creeping, crawling, and walking, he/she is now exploring their environment with senses and the ability to get around.
- ❖ This mode of learning continues through the age of twelve, but becomes less acute as the years go by.





2. PRE-OPERATIONAL PERIOD



- ❖ This is the stage between ages two and seven.
- ❖ During this stage the child is busy gathering information or learning, and then trying to figure out ways to use what they have learned to solve problems.
- ❖ During this stage the child will be thinking in specifics and will find it very difficult to generalize anything.
- ❖ The preoperational child's understanding starts and stops with what he sees. Logical rules (operations) do not yet come into play.
- ❖ It is the time when a child learns by asking questions.
- ❖ The child generally will not want a real answer to his question at this point.



2. PRE-OPERATIONAL PERIOD (Cont.)



- ❖ The child in this age group judges everything by the “me” basis...How does it affect me? Do I like it? .
- ❖ This child has no ability to go back in time and reason.
- ❖ As children make the transition from being toddlers to being preschool children, the most dramatic advance is in their language skills.
- ❖ At the same time, their mode of thinking changes dramatically.
- ❖ Children are not just little adults, but rather, they understand the world in a fundamentally different way than most adults do.
- ❖ The preoperational child's understanding starts and stops with what he sees. Logical rules (operations) do not yet come into play.



2. PRE-OPERATIONAL PERIOD (Cont.)



Magical thinking

In a young child's view, it is very possible that it rains because the sky is sad. If your baby brother gets sick and goes to the hospital, it could be your fault if you were mad at him the day before. If you want something very, very badly and it happens, then your wanting caused it to happen. These are examples of magical thinking.



Egocentric thinking

They are also examples of egocentric thinking—not that the young child is selfish. It's just that he/she cannot take anyone else's perspective, so that everything in the world revolves around him. When they're sad, they cry. So, it must be that the sky does, too.

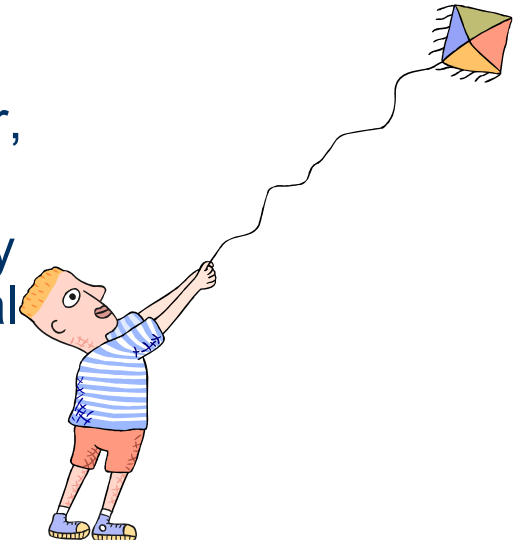


(An egocentric child, on seeing his father upset, hands him his favorite teddy bear. This act shows that the child is not selfish. He is offering the thing that he finds most comforting. He cannot imagine that his father would not have the same feelings.)



3. CONCRETE OPERATIONS PERIOD

- ❖ This is the stage between ages seven to ten/eleven.
- ❖ Children begin to manipulate data mentally. They take the information at hand and begin to define, compare, and contrast it. They, however, still think concretely.
- ❖ At this stage the child uses logical rules, but only applies them to things and people in the physical (or concrete) world.
- ❖ The concrete operational child is capable of logical thought.
- ❖ This child still learns through their senses, but no longer relies solely on them. He now thinks as well.
- ❖ A good teacher for this age group would start each lesson at a concrete level and then move toward a generalized level.





4. FORMAL OPERATIONS PERIOD



- ❖ This period begins at about age eleven.
- ❖ The child will break through the barrier of literalism and move on to thinking in more abstract terms.
- ❖ He/she no longer restricts thinking to time and space, they now start to reflect, hypothesize, and theorize.
- ❖ In the formal operation period, children need to develop cognitive abilities:
 - Knowledge of facts and principals
 - Comprehension
 - Application
 - Analysis
 - Synthesis
 - Evaluation



Attributes of the early childhood stage



1. Go down to his level

- ❖ To relate to a child you have to think like one.
- ❖ You need to understand his nature not compel him to submit to your nature.
- ❖ Basis of dealing: make him feel you are a friend.
- ❖ *“To the Jews I became as a Jew that I might win Jews. To the weak I became as weak, that I may win the weak”* (1 Cor. 9:20-22)

2. The Right Start

- ❖ Avoid sudden gestures during the first meeting.
- ❖ He builds his confidence on the figure of a person, his voice, features, movements and friendliness.



Attributes of the early childhood stage



3. Senses are important

- ❖ He uses his senses more than his mind.
- ❖ What he sees, hears, feels and tastes.
- ❖ The use of audio & visual aids is most useful.
- ❖ Story by Pope Shenouda “The lesson of the dove”.



4. Animals & Birds

- ❖ The child in this age loves animals and birds and sees them as talking creatures.
- ❖ Everything before him is alive, not only the statues and toys, but pictures too.
- ❖ Story by Pope Shenouda “The rooster carpet”.





Attributes of the early childhood stage

5. Playing

- ❖ The child loves playing, in which he finds his amusement and enjoyment. He also loves the person who gives him toys and who play with him.
- ❖ We owe it to children to occupy their time.
- ❖ What he sees, hears, feels and tastes.
- ❖ The use of audio & visual aids is most useful.
- ❖ Story by Pope Shenouda “The lesson of the dove”.

6. Laughter

- ❖ A child likes what makes him laugh. By laughter he expresses his pleasure or his happiness.
- ❖ He delights in the cheerful person who makes him laugh.





Attributes of the early childhood stage

7. Motion and Tunes



- ❖ A child loves movement and songs involving motion. Such movements please him and uses his stored energy.
- ❖ **Do not ask a child to sit down with no movement**, as this is against his nature; and do not force him by rebuke or threat.
- ❖ **Do not ask a child to act as an adult**. Remember the saying of St. Paul the Apostle, "*When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things*". (1 Cor. 13:11).
- ❖ Do not ask from a child any actions not in line with his age, or demand maturity above his level.
- ❖ An active child could not stay at church for two to three hours during Mass without movement. A "Psaltos" child is busy.



Attributes of the early childhood stage



8. Prayer

- ❖ We must teach our children to pray and raise their hands in prayer, kneel and worship.
- ❖ We repeat prayers with them until they can memorize them on their own.
- ❖ The family prayers have its effect on the child.



9. Hates Prolongation & Loves Repetition

- ❖ A child cannot concentrate on long speeches. Prolongation causes boredom to a child.
- ❖ He likes brief messages which he can pick up and understand easily.
- ❖ He loves the repeated phrases





Attributes of the early childhood stage

10. Imagination



- ❖ A child has a broad imagination by which he can write stories and **imagine incidents that never happened**, believe and tell them.
- ❖ **Do not tell him, because of his imagination, that he is a liar!**
- ❖ You can correct the story's line of direction - which he will accept from you and consider you co-author of the story!



11. Love of change

- ❖ A child becomes bored with the one thing, he likes variety and therefore likes change.
- ❖ **He searches for a new world where he can increase his knowledge with new things.**
- ❖ From here comes the importance of the **demonstrative** means for Sunday School children.





Attributes of the early childhood stage

12. Imitation



- ❖ A child in kindergarten and primary stages is fond of imitating (hand movements, walk, voices)
- ❖ Sunday School teachers and family members of the child have to be very watchful.
- ❖ We must establish in him good principles which make him reject the wrong that he sees or hears.
- ❖ Sometimes adults talk in front of children assuming that they do not understand!!
- ❖ If the parents are religious, he will pick up their piety. Here we see marriage is a responsibility and not just a mere relationship between a couple.
- ❖ A child does not forget what he hears, but frequently he recalls and repeats it, even in front of visitors, or other members of the family.
- ❖ A child does not keep a secret.



Attributes of the early childhood stage

13. The truth



- ❖ A child is a small human being entering a new society. He does not know how this society will treat him, and who is trustworthy.
- ❖ Beware of lying/playing tricks as he will not believe all you say to him in future.. By this, you have introduced doubt into his mind about you and caused him to lose some of his simplicity and can therefore lead him to confusion.
- ❖ Also, if he realizes that you have tried to trick him or deceive him in order to reach your aim, you will cause great harm in teaching him lying and deceit.



Attributes of the early childhood stage

14. The love factor



- ❖ If you love a child, you can control him, because the child follows who loves him and obeys him as he feels assured and trusts in him.
- ❖ Children love those who play with them. After you gain their love, you can teach them what they need to know or what is suitable for them.



15. Jealousy

- ❖ If you play with children or praise them beware of jealousy.
- ❖ A child might take revenge on the other child, punch him or hurt him even at a later time.
- ❖ The brothers of the righteous Joseph became jealous of him.





Attributes of the early childhood stage

16. Intimidation



- ❖ Beware of being intimidating. Do not cause him to be afraid of God and the church fathers.
- ❖ Do not make the image of God fearful to the child.
- ❖ Never indicate that the child is liable to lose God's love for him for any reason.



17. Praise & Encouragement

- ❖ A child in kindergarten or primary school tends to like praise which he interprets as a sign of love.
- ❖ Do not say: "I worry about him becoming too proud or vain, and I want to teach him to be humble, and says about himself that he is a sinner".
- ❖ By praising, you gain the child. By praising, you show him your love and also encourage him to perform good deeds.





Attributes of the early childhood stage

18. Owns everything



- ❖ A child feels he has the right to take everything!
- ❖ Do not accuse him of being a thief or a robber!!

19. Concept of “giving”



- ❖ A child at this age does not know the philosophies of love, but love to him means giving.
- ❖ God loves us, so He gives us everything, even mum and dad are gifts from God to us. When you express your love for a child, you give too.
- ❖ As the child rejoices in our giving to him, we must also teach him to give.
- ❖ Every time he gives something to others, we should praise and encourage him.





Attributes of the early childhood stage

20. Ability to memorize

- ❖ A child learns fast and enjoys a very good memory, a new memory not filled yet.
- ❖ As one educationalist said: A child, in the first five years of his age, can memorize a dictionary.

21. Absorbing the rituals

- ❖ How beautiful are our churches which contain all what satisfy the senses of a child, such satisfaction transforms his soul.
- ❖ Consider what is found in the church: icons, pictures of angels and saints, the hymns, music and incense.
- ❖ Also these rituals implant faith in the child deeply so he shall not deviate from them when he grows older.
- ❖ A child can receive all this while he is at an age of submission, before he gets older and enters the stage when the mind has a dominant influence over everything, and tries to debate and argue with all he takes in.





Activity – The Sacraments of Baptism & Confirmation



- ❖ Each group will be assigned a virtual Sunday school class.
- ❖ Class A – Two Year Olds
- ❖ Class B – Five Year Olds
- ❖ Class C – Nine Year Olds
- ❖ Prepare a lesson on the Sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation (Chrismation)
- ❖ Explain what resources would you use.
- ❖ Explain how will you introduce the concept.
- ❖ Explain what would the child retain at the end.