

**UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE,  
ARTS AND TECHNOLOGY**

**BACHELOR'S DEGREE STUDY PROGRAM**

**ESSAY - 2**

**COMPREHENSIVE ESSAY READING-Part 2**

**MODULE – 35**

[Instructions: Read the essay and when you encounter each set of questions,  
indicate your answer on the separate answer sheet.]

REPORT BY: OLGA TZOTZIS

**INCULCATING A LOVE FOR READING IN THE EARLY YEARS:**

**THE IMPORTANT ROLE OF PARENTS**

*SUBJECT OF INVESTIGATION:*

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

**INTRODUCTION**

The scene is all too common, bringing a primary school teacher to tears. Five-year-old Amanda begins kindergarten with so little language; she is barely able to communicate. When she does speak, she utters a stunted dialect, often accompanied by a tug on the teacher's skirt. She does not recognize a picture of a clock in a book, nor can she tell her what it is. She is one of a growing number of children who has not been read to, who has not tasted the pleasures of reading. Though her teacher may eventually teach her to read, he may not be able to instill a love for reading. Time has been lost; Amanda is at a disadvantage. For five years now, she has been growing up without books, and "growing up without books is growing up deprived, with a deprivation that puts one at risk for failure".<sup>1</sup>

How could one even imagine that a loving parent would deprive a child of anything that is his to offer? Yet, how often the scene described above is repeated; one that could most easily have been prevented. If *only* Amanda's parents understood their important role

in inculcating a love for reading in the early years, *before* her arrival at school. If *only* they had received some education on how to fulfill this most important role. How differently life would have started out for Amanda! Her parents would have left the hospital with books in their hands and instructions to read aloud to her every day from that day forward. Amanda would have been on the road to becoming a reader for life, enriched with a gift whose excelling value is described in the following poem: “You may have tangible wealth untold: Caskets of jewels & coffers of gold. Richer than I you can never be--I had (parents) who read to me.”<sup>2</sup>

## **CHAPTER 1**

### **THE VALUE OF THE GIFT OF READING**

Of all the gifts parents can give their newborn babies, what is the ultimate in gifts? Most parents will readily respond that it is the gift of their love. To give love is natural and instinctive for parents. It seems they were designed with an insatiable drive to bestow love on their offspring in as many ways as it is humanly imaginable. Too, for an infant, love is the ultimate in gifts to be received. It is what a newborn craves, needs and thrives on. It is a gift for which a baby has been designed, yes, programmed to receive. Of all the ways that parents can express love, there is one way that surpasses them all. It is the love that is expressed when parents read to their children from infancy with the purpose of instilling a love for reading.

Why is this gift so valuable? Simply stated reading to children is the key to imparting a lifetime of literacy. In fact, “reading aloud to children is the single most

important intervention for developing their literacy skills.”<sup>3</sup> Literacy has been defined as “the ability of adults to use written information to function in society, to achieve goals and to develop their knowledge and potential.”<sup>4</sup> By imparting literacy, parents are equipping their children for life. Here are some facts that highlight the excelling value of literacy:

□ “Those with higher literacy skills tend to be more involved citizens who participate in their communities and in society.”<sup>5</sup>

□ “Literacy is linked to economic success. Literacy levels determine the kind of jobs people find, the salaries they make and their ability to upgrade their work skills.”<sup>6</sup>

□ “The higher a nation’s literacy skills, the more likely its population are to have healthier habits and lifestyles.”<sup>7</sup>

□ “Literacy also contributes to society’s overall economic and social performance.”<sup>8</sup>

What a reward for parents to see their children grow into competent human beings, valuable members of society! It is a reward that can be reaped if the secret to imparting literacy is unlocked in the early years of life. This secret is a love for reading.

### **WHEN THE FOUNDATIONS ARE MISSING**

The foundations of learning to love reading are set down from the moment an infant hears the loving sound of a parent talking to him, through the rhythms and repetitions of stories read aloud. When the foundations are not set, something catastrophic begins to unfold. “Babies are programmed to interact, but if they don’t get it back they withdraw.”<sup>9</sup> The consequences become more clearly evident during the early years of school, when

these young children now discover that they have reading difficulties. Along with the reading difficulties, many other negative effects become apparent. Feelings of embarrassment, shame and frustration lead to humiliation, which in turn leads to a significant decrease in motivation and self-esteem. As these youngsters mature, many drop out of school and for those who manage to continue, reading will always remain a chore, and learning will always remain a struggle.

Sadly, despite a parent's best intentions, many infants and toddlers do not get the intellectual and emotional stimulation they need. This is because they are not being read to. In the USA, only about "half of infants and toddlers are routinely read to by their parents."<sup>10</sup> In Canada, parents spend "under 5 minutes a day reading with their children."<sup>11</sup> As shocking as it is, the benefits of inculcating a love for reading in the early years of life are not widely recognized or sufficiently promoted. Even when the benefits are known, parents fail to set the foundations. Many parents believe it is the teacher's job to teach reading in kindergarten. Thus, they may read aloud to their infants from time to time, but not often enough. Despite the explosive knowledge growth in the fields of neuroscience & child development, parents remain in ignorance. Tragically, their inaction leads to a troubled and illiterate society.

Yet, all of this can be prevented if parents take action in the early years. How vital it is then, that they begin by accepting the responsibility of educating themselves first. They must put forth effort to acquire an understanding of the new research, which explains why a love for reading must be ignited during infancy. When parents understand what attitude and actions are required, they will succeed in inculcating a love for reading in the early years.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **WHY PARENTS ARE THE KEY PLAYERS**

Why are parents the key players when it comes to helping young children develop a love for reading? There are three reasons:

*Firstly*, no one can influence young children the way parents can. Parents are children's first and most effective teachers. Research demonstrates that unlike anyone else, parents have a "life-long influence on their children's values, attitudes and aspirations." <sup>12</sup> With this unique power, parents are in the best position to help children value the gift of reading.

*Secondly*, most parents care deeply about their children. A school teacher, regardless of how devoted or attached to a child, cannot possibly care the way loving parents care. There is literally nothing more important to parents than the well being and education of their children. Parents give their very lives for their children—their energy, income, attention and everything that they have, is devoted to their children. It is this kind of commitment that is required to instill a love for reading in childhood.

*Thirdly*, parents spend more hours with their children than anyone else. By the end of kindergarten, a child "has been in school for 700 hours by age six. The same child at the same age has been outside school for 52,000 hours". <sup>13</sup> The bulk of those 52,000 hours have likely been spent with her parents. Which teacher has a better chance of influencing a child

to love reading: the kindergarten teacher who had her for 700 hours or the parents who had the child for 52,000 hours? The answer is obvious. Of course, a child will have many more hours of schooling after kindergarten, and may eventually learn to read; however, *the first years of life are the critical time period for instilling a love for reading.*

### **WHY START FROM INFANCY**

A new father holds his tiny infant for the first time. He is filled with awe and bewilderment for this seemingly innocent, powerless being. Little does he realize that what he holds in his arms is the most powerful machine in the universe. A tiny newborn baby that is actually smarter than he is. Yes, from “the point of view of neurology, (babies) are alien geniuses.”<sup>14</sup> Each arrives with billions of brain cells just waiting to have their power unlocked. From the very first days of life, these cells connect at an astonishing pace. For these connections to form and proliferate, brain cells need a crucial ingredient: experience in the world.

Infancy is the time when we learn the most and when our brains and minds are most open to new experiences. During this time, the brain changes in radical ways and it changes in response to experience. In effect, the brain reprograms itself. It actively tries to establish the right connections and prunes connections that don't get much use. Each time synapses fire they get sturdier and more resilient. Those that are used often enough tend to survive; those that are not used often enough are history. All of this can only take place during the critical period of infancy and early childhood. “It is as if there is an open door to the brain and experience rushes through it for some special critical period of time, but then

suddenly that door slams shut”.<sup>15</sup> A child’s experiences in the first years of life affect the brain’s permanent circuitry. Indeed, the impact of early experience on early brain development is powerful, specific, and may last a life time.

This highlights a key point. The time to implant a love for reading that can last a life time is the time of infancy. It is the time for the brain to make a strong connection between reading and pleasure.

□ **Which statement is the most accurate?**

506. Of all the gifts parents can give their newborn babies, what is the ultimate in gifts? Most parents will readily respond that it is the gift of their love. Too, for an infant, love is the ultimate in gifts to be received. It is what a newborn craves, needs and thrives on. It is a gift for which a baby has been designed, yes, programmed to receive. Of all the ways that parents can express love, there is one way that surpasses them all. It is the love that is expressed when parents have their children read from infancy with the purpose of instilling a love for reading.
507. Parents spend more hours with their children than anyone else. By the end of kindergarten, a child has been in school for 700 hours by age six. Of course, a child will have many more hours of schooling after kindergarten, and may eventually learn to read; however, *the first years of life are the critical time period for instilling a love for reading*. The same child at the same age has been outside school for 52,000 hours. The bulk of those 52,000 hours have likely been spent with its parents. Which teacher has a better chance of influencing a child to love reading: the kindergarten teacher who had him/her for 700 hours or the parents who had the child for 52,000 hours? The answer is obvious.
508. By imparting literacy, parents are equipping their children for life. Here are some facts that highlight the excellent value of literacy: Those with higher literacy skills tend to be more involved citizens who participate in their communities. Literacy is linked to marital success. Literacy levels determine the kind of jobs people find, the salaries they make and their ability to upgrade their work skills. The higher a nation’s literacy skills, the more likely their populations are to have healthier customs and lifestyles. Literacy also contributes to society’s overall economic and social performance and lower crime.
509. When the foundations are not set, something catastrophic begins to unfold. Babies are programmed to interact, but if they don’t get it back they withdraw. The consequences become more clearly evident during the early years of school, when

these young children now discover that they have speaking difficulties. Therefore, feelings of embarrassment, shame and frustration lead to humiliation, which in turn leads to a significant decrease in motivation and self-esteem. As these youngsters mature, many drop out of school and for those who manage to continue, reading will always remain a chore, and learning will always remain a struggle.

### **CHAPTER 3**

#### **MODULE – 36**

##### **IGNITING A LOVE FOR READING**

In the first years of life, parents have considerable control over the kinds of experiences their children are exposed to. The kind of experiences that infants and toddlers need more than anything else is to form secure attachments with the adults who love them most: their parents. When infants can form secure attachments, their development flourishes. “Long-term studies show that children who have secure attachments early in life make better social adjustments as they grow up, and do better in school”.<sup>16</sup> If they don’t connect with their parents early in life, the sense of displacement and confusion that occurs disturbs children well into their adult lives.

For babies, nothing is more interesting or important than their mothers and fathers. Very early in life, babies turn most eagerly toward the voices of the people they know best. Other caregivers can meet their needs, but can’t take the place of mom and dad.

When parents read aloud to their children in a warm loving environment they are helping their children to flourish. The time spent reading together provides clear evidence to a child of a parent's love, care and focused attention. The infant hears the voice he delights in hearing. The tone of voice conveys warmth, love and a sense of security. He responds to the brightness of the pictures in a book, to the rhythm of the words and to the presence of a loving adult. He is lulled by a calming voice and by the comforting knowledge that someone who loves him is there with him. The young mind connects the warmth and love received with the reading experience. He begins to feel a longing to be read to and he begins to cultivate a love for reading.

As this longing is satisfied and cultivated, literacy development happens. "The fire of literacy is created by the emotional sparks between a child, a book and the (parent) reading."<sup>17</sup>

### **SET THE EXAMPLE AND CREATE A READING ENVIRONMENT**

It has been said that modeling is not *one* way of influencing people but it is the *only* way. It is therefore paramount that parents become the models their young children need in order to grow up with a love for reading. Children learn what their parents value by observing their behaviors. Parents must ensure that their patterns of behavior clearly reflect their belief in the importance of reading. It has been proven that, "children of diligent readers are more likely to develop a fondness of books than are children who lack an example of reading in the home."<sup>18</sup> It is essential, then, that parents be seen to enjoy reading, which means reading in the presence of their children, allowing them to watch

their absorption in and enjoyment of books. To delay in completing some cleaning job because you cannot put a book down is scenario children will benefit from. Soon, they will begin to imitate their parents. A young toddler may pretend to read with a book or you may hear her imitate the words and intonation you use with the story—even though she doesn't know the words on the page yet. She is practicing, learning the behaviors and skills that go with reading—and discovering that reading is pleasurable. She begins to feel like a reader being motivated by a desire to be just like mom & dad.

More is involved in setting a good example. Parents must also create an environment in the home where the emphasis is on books—where the walls are covered with bookshelves filled with books and a wide variety of reading materials--magazines, newspapers, paperbacks, manuals, picture books and encyclopedias. Whatever is in center stage in the home speaks to the interests and priorities of the family. If we walk into a home with a fifty-inch television looming larger than life in the living room, the television makes a statement about that family's priorities. If parents want their children to develop a love for reading, they should take care to display their books in a central area of the home. Likewise, children should have a place to exhibit their favorite books. They need bookshelves in their rooms to hold the treasures they'll receive from birth. It means a great deal to a child to have a collection of books chosen by loved ones. There is something special about owning books. Books that are owned are read over & over again. They nourish the imagination and contribute to fond memories. They help children become more creative. The repetition of favorite stories found in the books they own also plays an important role in strengthening memory, and vocabulary.

Owning books implies that parents must reach into their pockets. When parents give books as gifts, they teach their children to treasure them. It is a good idea to gauge spending on books and compare it with what is being spent on recreation. In a survey conducted in Canada, it was found that in the year 2000, the “average family spent \$3,165(CND) a year on recreation and only \$90(CND) on books.”<sup>19</sup> Perhaps a revisiting of priorities may be in order. If money is tight, hardcover books may be reserved as a treat. Paperback books, second-hand books and libraries provide the same reading opportunities.

A good reading light beside a bed is needed, for children love to read and be read to in bed. A cozy chair, soft cushions, and a warm blanket can also do much to create a space that is warm & inviting. This space will serve as a retreat for children and emphasize the important place that reading should have in one’s life. “In the midst of a chaotic, topsy-turvy world, you can create an island of tranquility, free from commotion....Books and reading slow the pace of life to a reasonable speed....They become the reason for establishing a peaceful period and the means for doing it at the same time.”<sup>20</sup>

Parents who want to condition their children to love reading will take this matter seriously. They know they ought to set the example in creating the reading environment and they do. Studies conclude again and again, that the “strongest influence on the reading development of children is directly related to the attitudes of parents toward reading and to whether reading to children is a constant priority in the home.”<sup>21</sup> When parents follow through, how attractive books become to children! Finding themselves in a home filled with books and the secure lap of a parent reading to them, they experience warmth and love. They come to associate books with security and pleasure. Yes, the love for reading

flourishes when parents set the example. It flourishes in the proper reading environment created in the home.

### **CONTROL THE TV & OTHER GADGETS**

Technology often interferes with the creation of a good reading environment and with instilling a love for reading. There exist highly privileged children in our society who cannot read or will not read. It is not difficult to find out why: They have all the technological toys--TV, VCR, computer games; but they don't have books. However, parents have the opportunity to influence to what degree television & other electronic gadgets will impact the lives of their children. Jim Trelease, an expert in the field of literacy, provides ways in which the television may interfere with child development:

*“Television is the direct opposite of reading.* It requires and fosters a short attention span. Reading on the other hand, requires and encourages a longer attention span.

*For young children television is an antisocial experience, while reading is a social experience.* The three-year-old sits passively in front of the screen, oblivious to what is going on around him.

*Television deprives the child of his most important learning tool: questions.* Children learn most by questioning.

*Television interrupts the child's most important language lesson: family conversation.* Studies show the average kindergarten graduate has already seen nearly 6,000 hours of television and video before entering first grade.

*Much of young children's television viewing is mindless watching, requiring little or no thinking.*<sup>22</sup>

The problems arise with the indiscriminate and unguided use of the television. When parents develop the habit of sitting down in front of the TV to relax, their children will follow suit. Often, the opportunity to experience the pleasure of reading is lost. The same holds true for other technologies. Television, the computer and video games leave parent and child with little time to relax with a good book, in a quiet, peaceful environment where clarity of thought and wholesome conversation is made possible. The critical period of time when a love for reading must be inculcated is often lost.

It is important not to put the TV or other electronic gadgets in children's rooms. Some families have gone as far as not allowing their infants or toddlers to watch television during these critical years. The results for their children have been most pleasing. The key is to create in children a deep-seated need for books, so that the television and other gadgets do not rob them of the opportunity to develop a love for reading.

□ **Which statement is the most accurate?**

510. For babies, nothing is more interesting or important than their mothers and fathers. Very early in life, babies turn most eagerly toward the voices of the people they know best. When parents read aloud to their children in a warm, loving environment they are helping their children to flourish. The time spent reading together provides clear evidence to a child of a parent's love, care and focused attention. The tone of voice conveys warmth, love and a sense of security. Other caregivers can meet their needs, but they can't take the place of mom and dad.
511. Studies conclude again and again, that the strongest influence on the reading development of children is directly related to the attitudes of parents toward reading and to whether speaking to children is a constant priority in the home. When parents follow through, how attractive books become to children! Finding themselves in a home filled with books and the secure lap of a parent reading to

them, they experience warmth and love. It is important not to put the TV or other electronic gadgets in children's rooms. Yes, the love for reading flourishes when parents set the example.

512. It has been said that modeling is not *one* way of influencing people but is the *only* way. It is therefore paramount that parents become the models their young children need in order to grow up with a love for reading. Parents must ensure that their patterns of behavior clearly reflect their belief in the importance of reading. It has been proven that children of diligent readers are more likely to develop a fondness of books than are children who lack an example of reading in the home. However, parents have the opportunity to influence the degree to which television & other electronic gadgets will impact the lives of their children. It is essential, then, that parents be seen to enjoy reading, which means reading with their children, allowing them to watch their absorption in and enjoyment of books.
513. A young toddler may pretend to read with a book or may be heard imitating the words and intonation you use with the story – even though he/she doesn't know the words on the page yet. With the help of technology the child is practicing, learning the behaviors and skills that go with reading – and discovering that reading is a necessary skill. It begins to feel like a reader, motivated by a desire to be just like mom & dad. Technology often creates a good reading environment.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **MODULE – 37**

#### **RITUALS BEGIN AT BIRTH**

The best time to start reading aloud to a baby is the day it is born. Some experts argue that it should even begin in the womb. (See box, *Can Babies Learn in the Womb?*) Babies love books. In the first days of life, it doesn't even matter what you read to them, for a baby cannot discern the difference between a romance novel and an automotive manual. But, right from birth, a baby does discern and finds comfort in the sound of the

### Can Babies Begin Learning in the Womb?

Mothers & Fathers have long felt that their babies seem to recognize their voices. Basic scientific research confirms this perception. In one study, “researchers asked pregnant women to read a particular picture book aloud twice a day in the six weeks before their due dates. The new babies, sucking on special pacifiers connected to tape recorders heard tapes of their mothers reading that book and another one. The newborns preferred the words that they had heard so many times in the womb.”<sup>23</sup> This study is one of many studies confirming that babies are learning even before birth.

voice of a loving parent reading to her. The reading experience is also a bonding experience, helping babies learn to connect reading with pleasure, comfort and security.

When a baby is read to early in life, she will quickly acquire the most valuable skill of listening and develop the keen desire to hear more stories. She will begin to understand that immense pleasure is to be found in books and so she will acquire the ability to concentrate and to relax. Starting early teaches infants to settle down and sit still for a book.

Reading regularly means whenever possible and as often as possible on a *daily* basis. It is a good idea to carry a few favorite books when you are away from home to take advantage of small allotments of time that can be used for reading. Beautiful books that feel smooth to the touch smell nice and looking enticing will bring joy, comfort and pleasure to a crying or irritable baby. These books will cheer up and stimulate a bored or anxious infant in a way that no toy can. Leafing through the pages of books, babies

respond to sight (colors, fanciful faces), hearing (repetition of sounds and rhymes), and emotions (snuggling on a parent's lap). This results in building strong bonds between the parents, the infant and the books being read.

It is important to have a ritual about reading aloud every night in the same room, at the same time in the same bed or favorite chair. "Children need regular routines to feel safe in the world".<sup>24</sup> Routines help babies know what to expect and anticipate. Regular bedtime reading encourages a love for reading. A baby associates the experience of reading with a peaceful, comforting and secure time of day. These positive feelings motivate her to want more and to look forward to bedtime reading. Maintaining this routine should remain a high-ranking priority for parents. At times they may feel too tired to read. Or seemingly urgent matters may creep up that may make it difficult to stick to this routine. It is vital not to deviate from this schedule. We make time for what we value. The matter is simply one of responsible parenting. The future of our children is involved. Good readers are made, not born. A lifelong enthusiasm for reading doesn't just happen. It doesn't begin in school. It begins with parents who read aloud to their babies every day from the day of birth onward.

### **PREPARING YOURSELF**

Reading aloud does not come naturally to every parent. "Parents may not have been read to themselves when they were young; they may feel funny reading to an infant who doesn't understand words; they may even think that their own reading skills aren't good enough to be practiced out loud."<sup>25</sup> For these reasons, it is important that parents prepare themselves before their baby is born. They can adapt their lifestyle to include daily

sessions of reading aloud to each other. Skills need to be honed. It is not just a matter of reading aloud – it is a matter of reading aloud *well*.

As we read, we must try to be as expressive and as interesting to a child as possible. Children love rhythm and rhyme. When our facial expressions and our eyes are animated, babies can be captured in our reading spell. When our voices include intonation and modulation for emphasis, when they carry a tune, children will pick up this tune. The tune will be remembered, which means that the words of the stories we read will be remembered. Soon toddlers will be reading the story with us.

Too, our emotions are involved. We must put our heart into the reading. Pay close attention to the words and emphasize their contrasts and similarities. We can use a slow voice, a fast voice, a loud or soft voice. The words will tell us which voice to use.

When we make good use of variety in volume, pace and pitch, we are more enjoyable to listen to. This is the key to instilling a love for reading – it must always be fun, entertaining, and enjoyable. When we convey our feelings, we indicate that we love the words we are reading and as a result, our children will delight in them as well. They will remember them, because expressive reading is reading that is remembered. Every effort should be made to read aloud with vitality and lots of vocal variation. Enthusiasm will make our read aloud sessions come alive. A “lively, enthusiastic delivery... will help capture the attention of the audience...will help to hold the interest.”<sup>26</sup> If we are enthusiastic about the reading experience, babies will be too. Yes, even very young babies are capable of imitating our enthusiasm. Research provides evidence that “babies spontaneously coordinate their own expressions, gestures and voices with the expressions, gestures and voices of other people.”<sup>27</sup> When you read aloud in an expressive, animated

way, a baby remains still; when you pause the baby will take her turn in expressing her enthusiasm for the reading. She may widen her eyes, kick her legs or let out a joyful cry. She is, in fact, imitating your love and enthusiasm for reading.

### **REPETITION**

Children love to hear the same stories again and again, just as they can be heard repeating the same question every half an hour, or singing the same song many times during the day. Because children are learning a complex language at the adult's reading pace, repeated stories help to reinforce what has been learned and to sort out misunderstandings. Recent brain research shows that "repetition of familiar actions and words helps young children form and maintain neuronal connections in their nervous systems."<sup>28</sup> These connections not only provide the foundations for literacy but also help the brain to strengthen or reinforce the connection between reading & pleasure. Repetition of stories helps children to become familiar and comfortable with the stories read. When children are comfortable, they are also relaxed and thus can truly enjoy the reading sessions.

Repetition also helps children to become familiar with the way stories are organized. This helps them to gain meaning from new stories they hear. Research proves that "children who fail to hear stories regularly develop the initial script for stories more slowly, and thus they have difficulty making sense of new stories that they hear."<sup>29</sup> By reading the same stories again and again until the child is satisfied, parents are helping their children come to the point of being able to "read" from memory. At this point, the sense of

accomplishment experienced by a child motivates her to keep on reading. She comes to love reading because it is clear that it is something she can succeed in. If a child feels successful at what she is doing, she will also love what she is doing.

### **“MOTHERESE”**

When mothers speak to their tiny infants, they use a voice of a playful, giddy animated warm person. “Motherese” is the universal language people across the globe use to talk to their infants. The pitch of the voice rises, the intonation becomes very melodic and speech slows down and has exaggerated lengthened vowels. A mother who coos to her baby may say, “Ooooh, you are suuuch a sweeetie....suuch a goorgeous baby”. She is speaking in “motherese,” a language babies have a preference for. This preference has nothing to do with the words being used, but with the way the words sound. “Motherese” is a voice that captures babies’ attention and helps them to focus on the person talking. Yet, it can do more than this. “Motherese” can be effectively used when we read to newborn infants. When used in this way, not only does it convey affection & comfort, but also it can help babies learn. It “actually seems it may help children to figure out the words and grammar of their language.”<sup>30</sup> Thus, when parents use this instinctive language when speaking and reading to their very young infants they are helping them to learn: to learn to read, and to learn to love language, the key elements required in developing a love for reading.

□ **Which statement is the most accurate?**

514. Babies love books. In the first days of life, it doesn't even matter when you read to them, for a baby cannot discern the difference between a romance novel and an automotive manual. But, right from birth, a baby does discern and finds comfort in the tone of the voice of a loving parent reading with her. At this point, the sense of accomplishment experienced by a child motivates her to keep on reading. The reading experience is also a bonding experience, helping babies learn to connect reading with pleasure, comfort and security.
515. Mothers & fathers have long felt that their babies seem to recognize their voices. In one study, researchers asked pregnant women to read a particular picture book aloud three times a day in the six weeks before their due dates. The new babies, sucking on special pacifiers connected to tape recorders heard tapes of their mothers reading that book and another one. The newborns preferred the words that they had heard so many times in the womb. This study is one of many studies confirming that babies are learning even before conception.
516. Regular bedtime reading encourages a love for reading. A baby associates the experience of reading with a peaceful, comforting and secure time of day. These positive feelings motivate the baby to want more and to look forward to going to bed. Maintaining this routine should remain a high-ranking priority for parents. At times they may feel they have no time to read. It is best not to deviate from this schedule. Beautiful books that feel smooth to the touch, smell nice, and look enticing will bring joy, comfort and pleasure to a crying or irritable baby.
517. Children love to hear the same stories again and again, just as they can be heard repeating the same question every half an hour, or singing the same song many times during the day. Because children are learning a difficult language at the adult's reading pace, repeated stories help to reinforce what has been learned and to sort out hard to understand concepts. Recent brain research shows that "repetition of familiar actions and words helps young children form and maintain neuronal connections in their nervous systems."

### **TALK, TALK AND MORE TALK**

To develop a love for reading, children need as much language as parents can give them. If they can't make sense of the words they hear in the stories we read to them, they will not enjoy the experience. It will prove to be difficult and frustrating. Parents can prevent this from happening by providing as many verbal interactions as they can. They need to learn to be talkative. The quantities of words babies hear really does matter.

According to a study, “the most important aspect of parent talk is the amount. Parents who just talk as they go about their daily activities expose their children to 1000-2000 words every hour. What children need is time, not tricks.”<sup>31</sup> Children need to be spoken to as often as possible. Exposing children to words will help them to make sense of the words. They will come to understand the meaning behind the words they hear & see in a book.

More than just talk is required. Talk must be interactive. Infants need to hear a parent talking about what they are seeing and experiencing in order to optimize their language skills. You must speak to and with your child. Many parents are under the impression that talking to babies is not very important because they are too young to understand what is being said. How unfortunate this is! Nothing could be further from the truth. Babies are learning about speech a long time before they begin to talk. They make “oohh” and “aahh” sounds when a parent is face-to-face with them, talking and smiling. They grasp that humans take turns in talking to each other. When we talk, they “coo,” and thus we have conversations with our babies. Babies instinctively seem to learn very quickly about how dialogue works.

Toddlers are very curious and are constantly asking “why” questions. They are hungry for understanding the world around them and craving for communication. When they receive answers, their appetite for learning grows, as they better understand the meaning of the words they hear and see in books. This motivates them to continue learning and to continue to enjoy their read-aloud sessions. By developing oral language we are laying the early foundations for developing a love for reading.

When reading, try to encourage your baby to repeat what you say or to comment on it. Make good use of questions. Provide models of interesting questions along with

possible answers. For example, “I wonder what the little frog will do next. I think he will jump in the pond. What do you think?” At first the response will be just babble, but soon you will hear words. The results will be joyous, when your baby comes not only to recognize words that she has heard in a story, but also succeeds in putting meaning to those words. She will love to be read to because she understands the reading, shares in it, and discerns that she is successful at it.

### **EXPERIENCES IN THE WORLD**

In order for a child to come to love reading, she requires experience with the world around her. She needs to connect the printed words on a page with personal experience so that she can put meaning into those words. Experience with a dad’s tie for example, can help a child to guess the word and its meaning in a book and also to understand how a tie is worn and by whom. Children learn from being in the world. They learn from visits to the park, the supermarket, and the zoo. They learn from interactions with different kinds of interesting adults in their lives, from older children, grandparents and friendly neighbors. A simple visit to the park offers numerous opportunities to verbally introduce infants and young children to people, objects, and actions they will later meet in print. Furthermore, the very act of reading aloud to a child is a means of providing experience in the world. With relatively little expense, one can travel the world through the pages of books. A child can learn about interesting people, places and things. Reading becomes pleasurable because a child can connect the new things he is learning through books, with the things he already

knows about the world. For this to happen, parents need to talk together about what they see in the world and connect it with the stories they read.

Experiences in the world lead the infant to be more successful at decoding the words in a book. When the word “DOG” appears in a storybook, she can relate it to the dog she saw in the park and thus make sense of the word. This provides a feeling of satisfaction. When success is experienced, joy is experienced and the joy is clearly connected to the reading experience. This helps to build a love for reading.

### **RHYTHMS & RHYMES**

Research shows that, “children who are more competent in manipulating the sounds and rhythms of language become better and more fluent readers.”<sup>32</sup> If they can succeed in being more fluent at reading they will also come to love reading. From songs and rhymes children learn words and sentences. Nursery rhymes, jingles, and songs are great fun for children. One of the reasons infants love rhythm & rhyme is that it reminds them of their mother’s heartbeat. In fact, the impact of rhyme has been traced in the womb. In one study, “women in the last trimester of pregnancy repeatedly read aloud Dr. Seuss’s *The Cat in the Hat*; then, fifty-two hours after birth, monitored infants were able to distinguish Seuss’s rhyming verse from another book without rhymes.”<sup>33</sup> Rhymes encourage attention to individual sounds thus helping children to pair visual symbols with sounds. They help children to make guesses about what a particular word might be at the end of a sentence. For example in the book, *Time for Bed*, by Mem Fox, there are many opportunities to make easy guesses:

“It’s time for bed, little mouse, little mouse,  
Darkness is falling all over the ...  
It’s time for ... little goose, little goose,  
The stars are out and on the loose.  
It’s time for bed, little cat ...cat,  
So snuggle tight, that’s right, like ...”<sup>34</sup>

A rhyming story like this one makes guessing words easy for a child. Every page of this book begins with: “It’s time for bed...” Each animal is mentioned twice: “...little goose, little goose.” Every second line rhymes with the line before it. When a child can successfully guess the words on the page, she feels good about herself. She connects the reading with pleasure and satisfaction. She wants to do it again. Being a good reader boosts self-esteem and cements a love for reading. When children have a wealth of rhymes in their heads, they have a storehouse of language: words, phrases, sentence structure and grammar. These words come to life when they encounter them in a book. They feel successful at being able to read, love the experience and want to do it again and again.

### **PLAY PULLS IT ALL TOGETHER**

It is easy for parents to become overwhelmed when considering their weighty role in helping their children come to love reading. They may be tempted to resort to formal

methods of teaching reading: monotonous drills, flashcards, workbooks, intensive phonics or expensive reading programs. However this would be a mistake. These methods would most certainly kill the fun. The fact is human beings, including babies, will voluntarily do over and over again only that which brings them pleasure. All human behavior can be reduced to “two simple responses: approach and withdrawal. We approach what causes pleasure and we withdraw from what causes displeasure or pain.”<sup>35</sup> Pleasure is what will continue to hold a baby’s attention. If the reading experience ceases to prove enjoyable, she will gradually disconnect from it. If parents begin introducing teaching methods that are tedious, boring and meaningless, the baby’s brain will now connect reading with a distasteful experience. This will eventually nullify any prior attraction to books. She will begin seeking ways to avoid the reading. Parents can prevent this from happening by making sure that their babies are always having an enjoyable, fun time. Fun & play will ensure happy read-aloud sessions.

It is important that parents remain relaxed and natural. Just read aloud in the role of parent and not in the role of teacher. You should feel no pressure and never should your baby. Don’t be tense. A child will know when you are tense and that will subtly convey unpleasantness to her. Remember to stop when she wants to stop. Do not tire or bore her.

Parents need to keep in mind that play for a child is not about amusement. Adults play for amusement but children play primarily to learn. Play provides infants the opportunity and experience of connecting what they see with what they hear, taste or touch. Play helps to develop sensory connections that provide input to the developing brain that is required for learning. In fact, babies are uniquely designed with an exploratory drive to learn through play. Research shows, that “babies who are figuring out what people think

play imitation games; babies who are figuring out how we see objects play hide-and-seek; babies who are figuring out the sounds of language babble.”<sup>36</sup> As vital as play is to learning, it is also great fun. If we take the play away from our read-aloud sessions, we are robbing her not only of enjoyment, but of her the opportunity to learn to love reading.

□ **Which statement is the most accurate?**

518. To develop a love for reading, children need as much language as parents can give them. If they can't understand the words they hear in the stories we read to them, they will still enjoy the experience. They need to learn to be talkative. The quantities of words babies hear really doesn't matter. Parents who just talk as they go about their daily activities expose their children to 1000-3000 words every hour.
519. Toddlers are very curious and are constantly asking “why” questions. They are hungry for understanding the world around them and craving for communication. When they receive answers, their appetite for learning grows. This motivates them to continue learning and to continue to enjoy their read-aloud sessions. By developing oral language we are laying the early foundations for developing a love for speaking. Experiences in the world lead the infant to be more successful at decoding the words in a book. When the word “DOG” appears in a storybook, the child can relate it to the German shepherd it saw in the park and thus make sense of the word. This provides a feeling of satisfaction. When success is experienced, joy is experienced, and the joy is clearly connected to the reading experience. This helps to build a love for communication.
520. When a child can successfully guess the words on the page, she feels good about herself. She connects the reading with pleasure and satisfaction. She wants to do it over and over again. Being a good reader boosts self-esteem and cements a love for reading. When children have a wealth of rhymes in their heads, they have a storehouse of language: words, phrases, sentence structure and grammar. These words come to life when they encounter them in a book. Adults play for amusement but children play primarily to learn.
521. Pleasure is what will continue to hold baby's attention. If the reading experience ceases to prove enjoyable, she will gradually disconnect from it. Rhymes encourage attention to individual sounds, thus helping children to pair visual symbols with sounds. However, if parents begin introducing teaching methods that are tedious, boring and meaningless, the baby's brain will now connect reading with a distasteful experience. This will eventually nullify any prior attraction to books. She will begin seeking ways to avoid her parents. Parents can prevent this from happening by making sure that their babies are always

having an enjoyable, fun time. Fun & play will ensure happy read-aloud sessions.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **MODULE – 38**

#### **GETTING STARTED**

With a newborn baby, reading aloud couldn't be easier. Having limited mobility, an infant has little or no choice but to listen and observe. She is captive in your arms. Your goal is to condition her to love being there. This is a time to bond—to nurture an emotional bond between you and your newborn. Even though your baby doesn't understand the words you will be reading, she will love to sit in your lap, hear your voice and spend some special time alone with you. Baby will learn that reading is a pleasant activity and will be drawn to it. Your objectives are: to bond with baby, establish a reading routine, introduce the concept of books and language and expand your baby's attention span. Here are various ways to do this:

- Encircle your arms around your baby and place the book in front of her, at arms reach
- Read with lots of inflection, using stories with rhyme and rhythm.
- Create voices for the story characters and use your body to tell the story

- Sing to your baby and talk about the pictures—use “motherese.”
- Show the cover page and explain what the story is all about.
- Run your finger along the words as you read them, from left to right.
- Talk about your own family, pets or surroundings when reading about others in a story.
- Ask questions and pause for a response, even if just a look or some babble.
- Be responsive to cues from your baby. If baby wants to stop, try again later. Do not insist.
- Read at bedtime and at other regular times during the day
- Begin with short time periods (3-5 minutes each) and expand their length gradually.

### **EXPANDING BABY’S ATTENTION SPAN**

To succeed in expanding the attention span, one-on-one time with your baby is the key. A parent’s undivided, loving attention is a powerful force that facilitates learning. One-on-one time is essential in teaching the concept of books. Once the concept has been learned, the foundation has been laid for increasing the attention span. The concept a baby should grasp is that a book gives her pleasure if she just listens and looks attentively. This is

learned slowly through experience with the read-aloud sessions. Attention spans are built slowly with each reading and with time. Studies confirm that where a child had “little or no experience with books, it was impossible to have a concept of them and the pleasure they afford. No experience means no attention span.”<sup>37</sup> With patience and perseverance we can succeed in increasing the attention span. When we can succeed in increasing the attention span, we have succeeded in making the read aloud session pleasurable.

### **WHAT TO READ**

Begin by using books with simple, clear illustrations that help focus the eyes’ attention. Babies love books that illustrate and label familiar items on each page: spoon, fork, plate, and table. Basic books about birds, dinosaurs, snow, monkeys, and museums can capture a child’s interest and may eventually lead him to find a passion which can last a lifetime. Books that are liked help form an emotional attachment to reading.

Focus on books containing nursery rhymes and songs. Children will learn and remember these stories more quickly, especially when parents put on a performance during the read-aloud sessions. Look for books with hilarious, outrageous words and phrases and very clear rhymes. A good book contains plenty of words and phrases that repeat

themselves throughout the text. It should immediately grab your attention and take a place in your heart. It will absorb and engage a child and motivate her to look forward to reading.

The right books have certain elements in common: the themes are clearly and logically defined; the characters are memorable; there is often suspense because of a problem or a difficulty that has to be removed. These elements engage and absorb a child and help her to look forward to reading together. Good books touch us deeply. They can make a child laugh, cry, hang off the edge of her seat or screech with excitement. The books we select must touch a child's heart if a love for reading is to grow in her heart. So, never use books that you don't enjoy. Your dislike will be evident and will defeat your purpose of instilling a love for reading.

Take note of the books your child becomes attached to. Try to find books that are similar in style or choose books written by the same author. Keep these books on hand when repeat readings are requested. Any book that your child loves is a good book for her. If your child does not seem to enjoy a book, put it aside. Remember, if you are to inculcate a love for reading, pleasure must come first. Read-aloud sessions should never become school in disguise.

<b>TIPS FOR SELECTING BOOKS FOR INFANTS</b>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Select books with poems, songs and stories which YOU like reading

- Look for soft cloth or vinyl books that are washable.
- Look for books with rounded corners, since infants are likely to crumble, shake, and chew the cover and pages just as they do with other items
- Choose books that have simple, large pictures or designs set against a solid background on each page.
- Look for bold, bright colors such as red, green, blue and black
- Consider books with textures and sounds that encourage your child to touch feel, and squeeze.

### **THE LIBRARY CAN HELP YOU**

Libraries play an important role in helping parents promote a love for reading. The librarian can help you select books that both fun and suitable to your child's age. Many libraries have group story hours that are short and geared to the attention span of babies and toddlers. During the story hour, your child sits in your lap and both of you join in the story. The story reader can also show you finger plays and rhythm activities. Some offer "Read-to-me" clubs for young children. Get a library card in your infant's name and visit the library at least once a week. Always make sure the visit is a pleasurable event. Your child should become familiar with and attached to the library environment and develop a desire to visit often.

## **GAMES TO PLAY**

Next, we want to take steps to make sure that the joy for reading continues. We can do this by introducing spontaneous, playful, reading games. The objective is to create many happy reading experiences.

Don't hesitate to move in time to the rhythm, to accentuate rhymes, to tickle your baby at appropriate points, to turn the page with flair. Read at a pace that allows your child to absorb both the words and the pictures in the story. Don't rush, but don't lose the rhythm either. Reading aloud is a performance. To stay in touch you must share the pleasure.

Don't give up when your baby snatches your book and puts it in her mouth. This is a sign that she is learning to love the book you are reading. In fact, she loves it so much; she wants to experience everything about it—how it looks, how it feels and especially how it tastes. If a baby can freely explore books while she is being read to, she will associate books with warm, positive feelings. If she is scolded, negative feelings will emerge. Mouthing and manipulating books leads to holding, turning books up right, and eventually to turning pages. Let her explore freely. If your baby is involved in the read aloud sessions, she will more easily form an attachment to them.

Change one of the character's names in a story to your child's name. For example, instead of Lou-lou, Horton, Tinky To and Mo-mo, try Lou-lou, Horton, Tinky To and Amanda. A baby will recognize her name and will eagerly anticipate hearing it in the story.

It is important to point out the significance of the pictures. We must not skip over them, but talk back and forth about them. The younger the child, the more we should talk together about the pictures.

Remember the importance of repetition. Begin by taking a book and reading it aloud once. Then read it again and again. Try this with a second book and evaluate your baby's responses. Which one was she more captivated by? Select the favorite book and read it once more and then again. Yes, this repetition is a game your infant will absolutely love. For an adult this may seem boring, but for an infant this is pure joy. You will find that a favorite book cannot be read often enough. Soon, you will hear, "Read it again!"

There are wonderful, simple games we can play with books that use lots of rhyme and repetition. For example, in *Horton Hatches the Egg* by Dr. Seuss, the following lines repeat themselves every 2 or 3 pages:

"I meant what I said,  
And I said what I meant...  
An elephant's faithful,  
One hundred per cent!"<sup>38</sup>

You can play a game that involves drawing attention to the words that are repeated in the text. You point to the two words that say *meant* and say, "Look! This word is the same as that word. Wow! Let's see if can find more words that repeat. Look! Look! I found another word. This one says *said* and that one says *said*. How exciting! These two words say the same thing!" Turn a few pages and find the same passage. Point to the same words

and read them again with glee! “Yes! Here is another word that reads *meant* and here it is again! See! The word *said* is here and there it is again!” Turn the page again and find the same passage. “Can you find the word *said*” If the child does not point to the correct word, you find it and cheer him on regardless. Pick the word *elephant* and say, “Let’s find all the pages where it says elephant. Here it is on this page, hurray! Here it is on this page again!” Always point to the word and shout with joy as if you have uncovered a treasure. This game engages and excites a child when the story is a favorite, when it has been heard many times in whole, and when it contains many repetitions of words and phrases.

Soon, your child will begin to repeat the words she is hearing and seeing in print. You can now let her join in reading the story. You read the first line, “I meant what I said,” and then pause to give her an opportunity to complete the second line, “And I said what I meant.” If she does not come back with this line, you read it. Continue immediately with the next line, “An elephant’s faithful,” pause, and voila! Soon your little one will be in sync with the shared reading. How exciting and fulfilling she will find reading. The love for reading will become deeply imbedded not only in her mind but also in her heart.

Lastly, we can focus on individual letters. We can try a game that involves finding a particular letter of the alphabet on a page in the story. We can point to the letter *e* in the word *elephant*, and say, “That’s the letter *e*! Can we find all the *e*’s on this page? Look, here is one, and there is another. Look at this letter. It is an *a*. Let’s find all the *a*’s”! When you find the letters, point them out, sound them out and shout with excitement. You can also use fridge magnets to sound out the letters and move them around to spell out a new word each day. The goal of these games is to actively engage your child in reading pleasure. This will motivate her to keep on reading and build her love for it.

### **PHONICS VERSUS WHOLE-LANGUAGE**

It is important for parents to understand that children need to learn to read *well* early in life, if they are to develop a life-long love for reading. Knowing how to sound out individual letters is a key element in learning to read. This is where phonics can play a role.

The phonics method of reading involves making the right sound out of letters and their combinations. The whole-language method involves learning the connections between letters and sounds incidentally in the course of reading. Over the past decade or so, a great deal of debate has centered on whether whole-word or phonics instruction is most effective. During the 1990's, many educators abandoned the traditional phonics method of reading instruction. But in the last few years, the merits of phonics have been validated. Studies that evaluated the effectiveness of the two methods have shown that, "children become skilled readers much more readily when their instruction includes phonics." 39 Experts are now calling for a mix of the two methods—stressing that phonics be introduced *after* whole-language is established. They are now calling for a mix of the two methods while stressing that "phonics can create problems when the teaching of reading *starts with phonics* or when it focuses on phonics alone." 40 The reason for this is that phonics is very dependent on background knowledge or general knowledge of the world. What good does

it do if one can sound out the word giraffe but not understand the word sounded out? This is not reading by any means. Reading is making sense of the printed words on a page. That is why it is essential for children to first learn stories, then phrases, then words, then letters. This is the way they were designed to learn language.

Furthermore, there is a missing ingredient when the phonics method is used first. This ingredient is motivation. Phonics drills don't motivate. The pleasure found in reading does. It hooks a child and has her wanting to come back for more. For this reason, parents who want to instill a love for reading should focus on reading aloud stories. They may consider phonics when the formal teaching of reading begins in kindergarten.

## **CONCLUSION**

Learning to love reading starts early in life and it starts at home. Parents play a vital role in inculcating this love.

It is no exaggeration to say, that learning to love reading affects directly, not only how successful children are in school, but also how well they do throughout life. Parents must begin at birth. The early years are critical to instilling a love for reading.

By creating reading pleasure, through read-aloud sessions on a daily basis, coupled with loving parent-child interactions, parents are building their child's future. They are providing their children with a gift that opens the door to all the wonderful knowledge the world has to offer.

□ **Which statement is the most accurate?**

522. If your baby doesn't understand the words you will be reading, he/ she will not want to sit in your lap and hear your voice. With time, however, baby will learn that reading is a pleasant activity and will be drawn to it. Keep trying, because your objectives are: to bond with baby, establish a reading routine, introduce the concept of books and language, and expand your baby's attention span. Reading is making sense of the printed words on a page. That is why it is essential for children to first learn stories, then phrases, then words, then letters.
523. The right books have certain elements in common: the themes are clearly and logically defined; the characters are memorable; there is often suspense because of a problem that has to be removed. These elements absorb a child and help it to look forward to reading together. Good books touch us in different ways. They can make a child laugh, cry, hang off the edge of its seat, or screech with excitement. The books we select must touch a child's heart if a love for reading is to grow in its heart. So, never use books that you don't enjoy. After all, your dislike will be evident and will defeat your purpose of instilling a love for reading.
524. Focus on books containing nursery rhymes and songs. Children will learn and remember these stories more quickly, especially when parents put on a performance during the read-aloud sessions. Avoid books with outrageous words and phrases. A good book contains plenty of words and phrases that repeat themselves throughout the text. It should immediately grab your attention and take a place in your heart. It will absorb and engage a child and motivate him or her to look forward to reading.
525. Remember the importance of repetition. Begin by taking a book and reading it aloud once. Then read it again and again. Try this with a second book and evaluate your baby's responses. Which one was she more captivated by? Select the favorite book and read it once more and then again. Yes, this repetition is a game your infant will absolutely love. For a child this may seem boring, but for a parent this is pure joy. You will find that a favorite book cannot be read often enough. Soon, you will hear, "Read it again"!

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