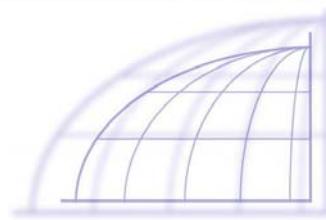


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Section B-5*



C-8: Attention to Outcomes

Stephanie hands in her work, forgets about it, and later doesn't read her teacher's comments since it's all in the past anyway. Emmett gives a presentation in class but doesn't stick around to gauge what impact it had. This knowledge construction function orients students to pay attention to the results of their own behavior. For learning to occur it is necessary to pay attention to the effects, or outcomes, of what one does. Failure to do so prevents the learner from discovering what leads to positive and what leads to negative consequences. Attention to outcomes is a prerequisite for rule seeking and the discovery of cause-effect relationships (T-25).

The attitude of many students is that they produce their school work for others and not for themselves. In their minds they do it because the teacher told them to do it; because it's a requirement and they have to. Attending to outcomes takes place in many different situations. Roger moves up too close to people, and speaks too loudly, but is inattentive to other people's grimaces and body language. A mother continues to hold her baby the same way and the baby continues to cry. A teacher continues to teach the same way and the students continue to show boredom and low achievement. A student continues to study the same way and the grades continue to be low.

To mediate the development of this knowledge construction function facilitate your students' discovery of the role of attention in the regulation of behavior. First use examples from familiar areas of life.

1. Have students discuss the purpose of signals that are designed to get our attention such as a smoke alarm, an oven buzzer, a traffic light and a telephone ring tone. What happens if we ignore those signals? What can happen if a flight controller ignores the buzzer on his screen? What can happen if we don't pay attention to the traffic light? Or the train's whistle?

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2. How do people signal to others how they feel? Discuss the use of facial expressions and body language (see also C-1). What happens if we ignore the signals others are giving us?

3. What happens if we ignore the signals that are most important to us? These are the signals that others return to us in response to what we do. When we don't pay attention to the results of our own behavior we ignore the most important buzzers and signals in our own environment. It is like ignoring the smoke alarm. When we ignore these signals we just go on doing what we have already done. We do not learn. Paying attention to the results of our own behavior enables us to take responsibility for our own learning and to use information to improve what we do.

Discuss ways that people and companies can make an extra effort to discover the impact of their work, or products, using feedback questionnaires, customer satisfaction surveys and other forms of market research. These methods involve the collection and analysis of data but they function in many ways as sophisticated alarms that are designed to wake us up and get our attention if something in our school, company or community isn't going well. - When they give presentations students can design their own feedback questionnaires to collect data from their audience as an exercise in learning how to pay attention to outcomes.

Attention to the connections between behavior and outcomes permits the discovery of rules and cause-effect relationships about one's own thinking and effort (see also T-25). Attention to outcomes is a foundation for the development of self-regulation (C-9) and autonomy as a thinker (C-10).