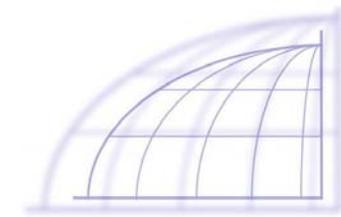


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Section B-5*



T-1: Volitional Control over the Stream of Consciousness

This knowledge construction function enables the learner to exert a measure of mental control over the flow of mind. Students who have difficulty with this function tune out and daydream even against their own will. The ability to regulate the flow of inner experience is partial at best and moments of drifting, daydreaming or other disruptions are quite common, and normal, throughout the day. For example, a jingle may disrupt the stream of consciousness even against the person's will.

Volitional control over the stream of consciousness is necessary to pay attention (R-2) to what goes on around us. However, volitional control over the stream of consciousness can also be directed inward. The focus on the internal process can be so keen that the person appears oblivious to her surroundings and, as the saying goes, "lost in thought".

A lessening of the volitional control over the stream of consciousness produces daydreaming and drifting. It can be self-induced as in reverie. It occurs more readily with tiredness or boredom. In these situations students may find their inner flow of visualizations and daydreams to be more attractive than the classroom learning environment. Over time a preference may develop that results in a recurrent loss of participation in learning opportunities and a widening knowledge gap may emerge between the student and the class as a whole. For example, Beth had some difficulty learning to read and she would begin to drift when the teacher talked about word attack skills, spelling and grammar. Falling behind she took to daydreaming even more. A fondness for daydreaming can over time be amplified by habits and result in the need for focused remediation of this function to enhance self-control over the stream of consciousness.

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Classroom teachers can develop this knowledge construction function by making students aware of their ability to regulate the stream of consciousness. Doing so can have a game-like quality: “Okay, first focus on what I write on the board. Write it down.” “Okay, now let your mind drift. Make a note of where your mind went.” Do this a couple of times. “Do you see how we in some ways can regulate where our minds go? This knowledge construction function has to do with learning how to regulate the inner flow of our minds so we can choose to focus and use our minds on things that may be important to us”. And “It is not always easy to control how we focus and use our minds. What makes it easier to do so? (For example, coming to school rested, having eaten, having an interesting topic, being in a properly lit and ventilated classroom). “What makes it harder to do so? (For example, having worries or aches and pains, being tired and hungry)”.

The classroom teacher can counter a pull to relinquish control over the stream of consciousness by using an active and experiential approach in the classroom. The curriculum should be meaningful to the students, relevant to their needs and concerns, useful, novel and challenging, but also appropriate to their developmental level. A mediating environment that enables students to develop their knowledge construction functions allows for students to become more actively involved in their own learning and thus increases the likelihood they will stay attuned to their learning environment. Note that some students may drift or tune out in the classroom as a result of psychological issues or personal problems that may benefit from a supportive understanding by the teacher or the services of the school psychologist or counselor.