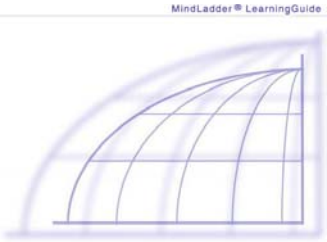

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T-6: Interiorization

The role of this knowledge construction function is to convert perceptual products into mental products that are more durable. Interiorization means internalizing or bringing inside. Interiorization is a prerequisite for information and experience to be stored and summoned as mental realities in the absence of the conditions that originally produced them.

The student who hasn't developed this knowledge construction function relies upon sensory experience to determine what is real or relevant. There is a low level of abstraction (see also below) and a strong preference for tangible information. A child may feel that if he doesn't perceive something it doesn't exist: Out of sight is out of mind. Difficulties with interiorization restrict the child to the present as the mental pictures that are needed to evoke the past or project the future are unavailable. Such as learner's functioning is often characterized by concrete, imitative and reproductive modes of operation: Interiorization is a prerequisite for mental representation and higher levels of cognitive functioning.

It is often thought that children who have difficulty interiorizing their experiences should have their information presented in a concrete manner as they are thought to be unable to operate in a more abstract way. While interiorization is a prerequisite for higher levels of cognitive functioning this conclusion is unwarranted. Difficulties with interiorization, if anything, make it harder to know a learner's abstract thinking ability and what it may become with mediation. Interiorization gets outside information into the mind whereas abstraction (T-13) creates higher order categories drawing upon whatever already is there. In this sense abstraction relies upon interiorization. Difficulties with interiorization impact on abstraction, and many other knowledge construction functions, as their effect is to reduce the availability of the mental products that form the basis for

higher forms of thinking. Rather than presenting information to these learners in a concrete manner the task is to develop the function of interiorization so more information of all types can become available to all of the transformational knowledge construction functions of these learners.

Higher functioning students also benefit from mediation to develop this knowledge construction function as it enables them to better understand the critical role of their mind in culling information from the environment. Having acquired such an understanding they too can use this function to internalize information from the environment that they can purposefully summon and reuse over time.

Children need to learn that they can think about things inside their heads even without having an object before them. You can use simple activities to accomplish this objective: For example, make an overhead of an interesting and richly detailed photograph. Put it under a cover on the overhead. Remove the cover for a brief interval of time. Repeat a few times. Have your students write down what they notice after each brief exposure. Use the experience to heighten their awareness of their ability to convert perceptual information into mental information that they over time can summon more or less at will (see also T-8). Use discussions to help your students develop their understanding of this knowledge construction function and the importance of internalizing information for later use. "What would happen if we did not have this knowledge construction function and could not internalize information?" – "We would have to learn the same material over and over again."

As students become aware of this function their curiosity grows and you may together create various tasks that highlight the role of interiorization. Students may become fascinated with how information is internalized when perception is modified. For example, they may compare the experience of maneuvering in a dark unfamiliar versus a dark familiar environment. How does darkness in an unfamiliar environment shift cognitive processing towards the reception functions? How does darkness in a familiar environment shift cognitive processing towards interiorized information? The experience of the unfamiliar vs. familiar highlights the contribution of interiorization.

Only a small portion of the information we register undergoes interiorization. This portion, however, is uniquely significant because we have the ability to evoke it from memory (T-8) and use it over time to build our knowledge base and guide our behavior. Through interiorization the student's inner reality becomes as important a

determinant of the learner's outlook as the external reality. Over time, as new information is absorbed in light of existing ideas, interiorization helps to create the experience of widening one's horizons and changing one's perceptions.

Sensory information, traces, symbols, signs, feelings, mental images and associations may all be processed, combined and rehearsed in the mind to facilitate internalization. Meaning making helps to ensure interiorization as does the deliberate creation of rich associations.