

children learn what they live poem

Children learn what they live poem is a powerful and enduring statement that encapsulates a fundamental truth about childhood development and the profound impact of environment on a child's burgeoning understanding of the world. This insightful phrase, often attributed to Dorothy Law Nolte, serves as the bedrock for understanding how early experiences shape a child's personality, values, and behaviors. This article will delve deep into the essence of this impactful sentiment, exploring its various facets, its psychological underpinnings, and practical applications for parents, educators, and caregivers. We will unpack how the home environment, the interactions children have, and the emotional atmosphere they breathe directly translate into their learned behaviors and beliefs. Understanding this principle is crucial for fostering positive growth and development in children, ensuring they learn from environments that nurture empathy, resilience, and well-being.

The Core Philosophy of "Children Learn What They Live"

The adage "Children learn what they live" is far more than a simple nursery rhyme; it's a profound psychological principle that highlights the formative power of a child's environment. It suggests that children are not born with innate, fully formed personalities but rather absorb and internalize the lessons, behaviors, and emotional tones of their surroundings. This learning process is continuous and often unconscious, shaping a child's worldview from their earliest moments. The poem itself, attributed to Dorothy Law Nolte, paints vivid pictures of how specific environmental influences lead to corresponding character traits. For instance, living in an atmosphere of criticism can lead a child to develop a sense of guilt, while living with encouragement can foster confidence. This direct correlation between lived experience and learned behavior is the central tenet of this powerful message.

Understanding the Poem's Impact

Dorothy Law Nolte's poem, "Children Learn What They Live," has resonated with generations because it speaks to a universal truth. It articulates, in simple yet profound language, how the everyday interactions and emotional climate of a child's home and early life directly contribute to their character development. The poem serves as a mirror, reflecting back to adults the responsibility they hold in shaping the next generation. Each stanza offers a stark contrast between negative and positive living environments and their predictable outcomes on a child's psyche. This clear cause-and-effect

relationship makes the poem an invaluable tool for self-reflection and intentional parenting.

The Role of the Environment in Childhood Development

The environment in which a child grows is arguably the most significant factor in their development. This encompasses not only the physical surroundings but, more importantly, the emotional and social landscape. Children are highly attuned to the nuances of human interaction, absorbing the unspoken messages as readily as the spoken words. A home characterized by warmth, safety, and open communication will likely foster a child who is secure, empathetic, and confident. Conversely, an environment marked by conflict, neglect, or excessive criticism can imprint patterns of insecurity, aggression, or low self-esteem. The concept of "children learn what they live" underscores the critical importance of cultivating environments that promote healthy emotional and social growth.

Exploring the Stanzas: How Environment Shapes Behavior

The poem's brilliance lies in its detailed and relatable examples of how specific environmental factors translate into learned behaviors and personality traits. Each stanza presents a clear cause-and-effect relationship, offering parents and caregivers a tangible understanding of their influence. These stanzas are not merely poetic expressions; they are observations grounded in child psychology, demonstrating how consistent exposure to certain conditions shapes a child's internal framework for understanding themselves and the world around them.

If Children Live With Criticism

The opening lines of the poem, "If children live with criticism, they learn to condemn," highlight a fundamental aspect of observational learning. When children are frequently subjected to judgment, disapproval, or harsh correction, they internalize this critical stance. This can manifest in their own interactions with others, leading them to become judgmental and quick to find fault. More insidiously, it can also foster a deep-seated sense of inadequacy and self-criticism within the child. They learn that flaws are met with negativity, which can stifle creativity and risk-taking, essential components of healthy development. The constant feeling of not being "good enough" can be a heavy burden, impacting their self-esteem and their ability to form healthy relationships.

If Children Live With Hostility

Living with hostility, whether through constant arguments, anger, or aggressive behavior, teaches children that conflict is the norm. Consequently, they may learn to be hostile themselves, reacting to challenges with aggression or defensiveness. This can create a cycle of negative interactions, both within the family and as they venture into the wider world. Children exposed to hostility may struggle with emotional regulation, finding it difficult to manage their own anger or to respond calmly to frustrating situations. They might also develop a generalized sense of fear or anxiety, perceiving the world as an unsafe and unpredictable place. This can hinder their ability to trust others and to build secure attachments.

If Children Live With Fear

When children live in an environment characterized by fear, they learn to be fearful. This can stem from parental anxiety, household instability, or exposure to traumatic events. Such children may develop a pervasive sense of apprehension, making them hesitant to explore, to try new things, or to assert themselves. They might become overly dependent on others for reassurance, struggling with independence and self-reliance. Chronic fear can also impact their physical health, leading to sleep disturbances, digestive issues, and a weakened immune system. The poem's stark reminder that "If children live with fear, they learn to be apprehensive" underscores the vital need for creating a secure and stable home environment.

If Children Live With Pity

Living with pity, while often well-intentioned, can inadvertently teach children to see themselves as helpless or deserving of constant sympathy. They may learn to exploit their perceived misfortunes to gain attention or avoid responsibility. This can hinder the development of resilience and problem-solving skills, as the child may become accustomed to having their problems solved by others rather than developing their own coping mechanisms. While empathy is a crucial human trait, an excess of pity can foster a victim mentality, which is detrimental to a child's personal growth and their ability to navigate life's challenges independently.

If Children Live With Ridicule

Exposure to ridicule, teasing, or mockery can be deeply damaging. When children are frequently subjected to ridicule, they learn to feel ashamed of themselves, leading to low self-worth and social withdrawal. They may become

overly sensitive to the opinions of others, constantly seeking validation or fearing judgment. This can manifest as shyness, social anxiety, and a reluctance to express their true thoughts and feelings. The poem's observation that "If children live with ridicule, they learn to be shy" highlights the importance of fostering an environment where individuality is celebrated, not mocked.

If Children Live With Encouragement

In direct contrast to criticism, living with encouragement fosters a sense of confidence and self-belief. When children are praised for their efforts, supported in their endeavors, and told they can achieve their goals, they internalize these positive messages. They learn to believe in their own capabilities, to take healthy risks, and to persevere in the face of setbacks. Encouragement builds resilience, motivates learning, and promotes a positive self-image. The poem states, "If children live with encouragement, they learn confidence." This is a powerful testament to the impact of positive reinforcement on a child's psychological well-being.

If Children Live With Tolerance

Tolerance, in the context of child-rearing, means accepting a child's differences and mistakes without harsh judgment. When children live with tolerance, they learn to be tolerant of others. This means they develop an understanding and appreciation for diversity, respecting different opinions, backgrounds, and abilities. They learn that it's okay to be different and that everyone deserves to be treated with kindness and respect. This fosters a sense of inclusivity and reduces prejudice, creating individuals who are more likely to be compassionate and understanding global citizens.

If Children Live With Praise

Praise, when given genuinely and appropriately, can significantly boost a child's self-esteem and motivation. Children who are praised for their achievements and efforts learn to feel proud of themselves and to strive for excellence. They develop a positive work ethic and a sense of accomplishment. However, it's important that praise is focused on effort and progress rather than solely on innate talent, to avoid creating a fear of failure. The poem correctly notes, "If children live with praise, they learn to be appreciative." This appreciation extends not only to the praise they receive but also to the positive relationships that foster it.

If Children Live With Acceptance

Acceptance, the act of loving and valuing a child for who they are, flaws and all, is crucial for healthy emotional development. When children feel truly accepted by their primary caregivers, they learn to accept themselves. This forms the foundation for self-love and a secure sense of identity. Children who are accepted are more likely to be emotionally secure, to have healthy self-esteem, and to form trusting relationships. They learn that they are worthy of love and belonging, regardless of their achievements or perceived imperfections.

If Children Live With Honesty

Honesty is a cornerstone of trust and integrity. When children grow up in an environment where truthfulness is valued and practiced, they learn to be honest themselves. They understand the importance of integrity and the consequences of deception. This fosters a sense of reliability and trustworthiness in their character. Living with honesty means open communication, where truths are spoken with kindness and respect, creating a foundation of trust within the family unit.

If Children Live With Fairness

Fairness in parenting involves treating children equitably, setting clear and consistent boundaries, and ensuring that rules are applied impartially. When children experience fairness, they learn to be fair themselves. They develop a sense of justice and an understanding of right and wrong. They learn to respect rules and to consider the impact of their actions on others. This fosters a sense of responsibility and helps them to navigate social situations with a sense of equity.

If Children Live With Security

A sense of security is paramount for a child's well-being. This includes physical safety, emotional stability, and predictable routines. When children live in a secure environment, they learn to feel secure. This security allows them to explore, to learn, and to take developmental risks without excessive anxiety. They develop a sense of trust in their caregivers and in the world around them. This feeling of safety is the bedrock upon which a child builds confidence and resilience.

If Children Live With Belonging

Feeling a sense of belonging is a fundamental human need. When children feel like they are an integral part of their family and community, they learn to believe in themselves. This sense of belonging fosters a strong identity, emotional security, and social competence. They learn that they are valued, loved, and have a place in the world. This positive self-perception is crucial for their overall psychological health and their ability to form meaningful connections with others.

The Psychological Underpinnings of "Children Learn What They Live"

The principles outlined in the "Children learn what they live" poem are deeply rooted in established psychological theories. Observational learning, social learning theory, and attachment theory all offer frameworks for understanding how children absorb and internalize the behaviors and emotional states of their caregivers and environment. These theories collectively support the poem's message by demonstrating the powerful and lasting impact of early experiences on a child's developing brain and personality.

Observational Learning and Modeling

Albert Bandura's social learning theory, particularly the concept of observational learning or modeling, is central to understanding "Children learn what they live." Children learn by watching and imitating the behavior of others, especially their parents and significant adults. If adults exhibit aggressive behavior, display impatience, or resort to yelling, children are likely to adopt these patterns. Conversely, if adults demonstrate kindness, problem-solving skills, and emotional regulation, children learn these positive behaviors. The poem serves as a practical illustration of this theory, showing how specific observed behaviors are directly translated into learned traits.

The Impact of Emotional Climate

The emotional climate of a home or care setting plays a significant role in a child's development. A home filled with warmth, love, and consistent affection fosters emotional security. Children who experience this learn to trust, to be open with their emotions, and to develop healthy attachment bonds. Conversely, an environment characterized by emotional distance, conflict, or volatility can lead to emotional dysregulation, anxiety, and

difficulties in forming secure attachments. The poem's emphasis on living with praise, acceptance, and security directly relates to creating a positive emotional climate that promotes healthy emotional development.

Attachment Theory and Learned Behaviors

Attachment theory, pioneered by John Bowlby and Mary Ainsworth, highlights the critical importance of early bonds between a child and their primary caregiver. Secure attachment, formed through consistent and responsive caregiving, provides a foundation of trust and safety. Children with secure attachments are more likely to be confident, explore their environment, and develop healthy social relationships. The poem's message implicitly supports this, as environments characterized by acceptance, security, and belonging are precisely those that foster secure attachment. When children feel securely attached, they are better equipped to learn positive behaviors and to develop a resilient sense of self.

Practical Applications for Parents and Educators

The insights gleaned from the "Children learn what they live" poem are not merely academic; they offer actionable guidance for parents, educators, and anyone involved in a child's upbringing. By consciously creating nurturing and supportive environments, adults can actively shape positive developmental outcomes. The poem serves as a constant reminder to be mindful of our own actions and the messages they convey to the children in our care.

Creating a Positive Home Environment

The most direct application of the poem's message is in fostering a positive home environment. This involves:

- Modeling desired behaviors, such as kindness, patience, and respect.
- Communicating openly and honestly with children.
- Providing consistent routines and boundaries for a sense of security.
- Offering encouragement and praise for effort and progress.
- Showing acceptance and unconditional love.
- Resolving conflicts constructively and calmly.

By prioritizing these elements, parents can create a foundation for children to learn positive life skills and develop into well-adjusted individuals.

Intentional Parenting and Teaching

Understanding "Children learn what they live" encourages intentional parenting and teaching. This means being conscious of the examples we set and the atmosphere we cultivate. It involves:

- Reflecting on personal behaviors and their potential impact on children.
- Actively choosing words and actions that build up rather than tear down.
- Creating opportunities for children to learn through positive experiences.
- Fostering empathy and understanding by discussing feelings and perspectives.
- Being present and engaged in a child's life, offering support and guidance.

This proactive approach ensures that children are learning from environments that promote their optimal growth and development.

The Long-Term Impact of Early Experiences

The lessons children learn in their formative years have a lasting impact that can shape their entire lives. The poem's stark contrasts between negative and positive influences illustrate how early experiences can set a trajectory for future behavior, relationships, and overall well-being. Investing in creating positive learning environments for children is an investment in a healthier, more compassionate society. The principles embedded in "Children learn what they live" are timeless and continue to be a guiding light for anyone committed to nurturing the potential within every child.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the core message of the poem 'Children Learn

What They Live'?

The core message is that children absorb and internalize the behaviors, attitudes, and emotional environments they are exposed to in their daily lives, shaping who they become.

Who is commonly associated with the poem 'Children Learn What They Live'?

Dorothy Law Nolte is widely recognized as the author of the poem 'Children Learn What They Live'.

Can you give an example from the poem that illustrates its meaning?

Yes, the line 'If children live with criticism, they learn to condemn' is a direct example showing how negative feedback can lead to judgmental behavior in children.

How does the poem suggest children learn from fear?

The poem states, 'If children live with fear, they learn to be apprehensive,' highlighting how a fearful environment can foster anxiety and caution in a child.

What is the positive counterpart to living with criticism, according to the poem?

The poem suggests that 'If children live with praise, they learn appreciation,' indicating that positive reinforcement fosters gratitude and recognition in children.

What is the poem's takeaway for parents or caregivers?

The poem serves as a powerful reminder to parents and caregivers to be mindful of their own behavior and the environment they create, as it directly impacts their children's development and character.

How does the poem address the impact of honesty?

It states, 'If children live with honesty, they learn what truth is,' emphasizing that consistent truthfulness in the home teaches children the importance of honesty.

What does the poem suggest children learn from living with encouragement?

The poem says, 'If children live with encouragement, they learn confidence,' illustrating how consistent support builds a child's self-esteem and belief in their abilities.

In what way does the poem link acceptance to a child's learning?

The poem states, 'If children live with acceptance, they learn to love,' suggesting that feeling accepted fosters a child's capacity for love and positive relationships.

What is the ultimate message about creating a positive environment for children, as conveyed by the poem?

The ultimate message is that by actively choosing to live with love, kindness, fairness, and encouragement, adults can help children grow into well-adjusted, compassionate, and confident individuals.

Additional Resources

Here are 9 book titles related to the theme of children learning from their environment, with each title starting with "" and a short description:

1. It's About What They See

This book explores the subtle ways children absorb the world around them, from the colors in nature to the expressions on people's faces. Through simple, evocative illustrations, it shows how everyday observations shape a child's understanding of life and relationships. It emphasizes that children are constantly learning, even when they aren't in a formal classroom setting.

2. Inspired by Their Surroundings

This heartwarming story follows a young child who finds joy and learning in the natural world. From the patterns of leaves to the sounds of birds, the book highlights how engaging with nature fosters curiosity and a sense of wonder. It's a gentle reminder of the profound educational value of simple, unadulterated experiences.

3. Immersed in Everyday Life

This picture book captures the essence of childhood learning through daily routines and interactions. Whether it's helping a parent cook or playing with friends, the narrative demonstrates how children internalize values and behaviors from the people and activities they encounter. It celebrates the richness of domestic life as a primary learning ground.

4. *Illustrating Their Understanding*

This book uses beautiful illustrations to portray how children interpret and learn from the visual cues in their environment. It shows how they piece together concepts of fairness, kindness, and resilience by observing the world around them. The artistic style reflects the developing cognitive processes of a young mind.

5. *Innocence Absorbing All*

This poignant tale focuses on a child's pure and open reception of the world. It illustrates how even small gestures of love and support, or witnessing acts of generosity, deeply influence a child's developing character. The book emphasizes the importance of creating positive environments for these formative absorptions.

6. *Inheriting the World's Lessons*

This book explores the intergenerational transfer of knowledge and wisdom. It shows how children learn not just from their immediate surroundings but also from the stories, traditions, and lessons passed down by elders. It highlights the continuity of learning through family and community.

7. *Intuition Growing Strong*

This gentle narrative delves into how children's innate curiosity and intuition are nurtured by their experiences. It portrays moments of discovery and learning that happen organically, driven by a child's natural desire to understand. The book encourages adults to foster environments where this inner knowing can flourish.

8. *In the Company of Kindness*

This book centers on the profound impact of a kind and supportive environment on a child's development. It illustrates how witnessing and experiencing acts of kindness teaches children empathy, compassion, and understanding. The stories showcase how positive social interactions are fundamental to learning about the world.

9. *Internalizing What They Feel*

This introspective story explores how children learn and process emotions based on the feelings and reactions they observe in their environment. It shows how the emotional atmosphere of their home and community shapes their own emotional intelligence and their understanding of human connection. The book underscores the importance of emotional well-being in the learning process.

Children Learn What They Live Poem

Children Learn What They Live Poem

Related Articles

- [christmas advent calendar ideas for adults](#)
- [chris cuomo political party](#)
- [christian thought and practice](#)

[Back to Home](#)