

## National Learning Month

Have you ever tried to learn something new, but were afraid of being made fun of or judged? A classroom or a home might have puzzles that help with brain development, art supplies for creativity, and toys for play, but if a child doesn't feel safe to explore and make mistakes, they might not be able to use those tools to the best of their ability.

Self-confidence (and the courage to try, make mistakes, and learn) begins in an environment of compassion, creativity, patience, and security. However, self-confidence needs something more to really shine: we need to feel responsible for our own growth. How can we as parents help our children learn what they need to learn while encouraging them to love learning at the same time?

### Behaviorism and Constructivism

In education and parenting techniques, there are two powerful theories of learning.

**Behaviorism** focuses on positive and negative reinforcement, memorization, and obedience.

**Constructivism** focuses on the process of discovery, group discussion of "right" and "wrong" answers, and the creation of new meaning.



Soobin David Oh is an Early Childhood Educator from the Children's Institute and Portland State University believes that we see behaviorism used almost exclusively in schools, which means we need a more balanced approach to educating and caring for young children.

### What are some examples?

Soobin says that behaviorist methods are extremely effective in short-term motivation:

- You start with an automatic reflex. Some things you don't put too much thought into -- you simply react. For example: children respond to a horn by freezing their bodies. In certain situations (walking alongside a busy street), this is very useful for children to stay safe. The child reacts without considering why they are reacting.

He also says that constructivist methods are extremely effective for long-term motivation:

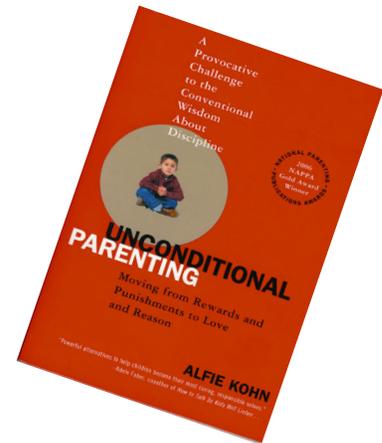
- You focus on solving problems. As Soobin says, children feel they have a voice and can participate in the active creation of their own learning. For example: when a child draws a picture, you might think to say, "What a beautiful picture!" However, to encourage the child to think about the meaning of their picture instead of what you believe it is worth, you might say, "It looks like you used a lot of colors. Would you like to tell me about the colors you used?"

## Book Review

### **Unconditional Parenting: Moving from Rewards and Punishments to Love and Reason**

by Alfie Kohn

This book encourages parenting techniques that “help children become their most caring, responsible selves.”



Kohne says that we are often taught that “good things must always be earned, never given away.” If our presence and attention for others “depends on their performance,” people feel “they’re accepted only when they act the way we demand.” A child is called ‘disgusting’ for pooping their pants while another child gets candy for using the toilet. This not only makes our love look distant whenever others fail to please us, it often “morphs into conditional self-approval” for the child, who then disowns “the parts of themselves that aren’t valued.”

Especially in a child’s moments of insecurity or tantrum, we need to first show our “unshakable love” by providing refuge.



But wait a minute, you might think that offering refuge before discipline reinforces negative behavior, right? The focus should be on providing a safe setting to explore “what’s going on underneath the visible behavior.” If we assume rude behavior is the “outward expression of feelings and thoughts,” our mindset can guide children to “accept themselves as fundamentally good people, even when they screw up or fall short.”

**vroom**  
Brain building moments

#### **A Changing Conversation**

When you’re changing your child, make a funny sound. How does he/she respond? By smiling? Kicking his/her legs? Making a sound? Try a new sound and see what he/she does. Keep adding new ones to the mix!

Ages 0-1

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#### **Brainy Background** powered by Mind in the Making

Back and forth conversations can happen even without words. You are teaching your child about how conversations work. First one person speaks, then the other. This is an early and important lesson about the pleasure and skill of communicating—a skill that’s important in school and in life.

For more activities like these, check out the free Daily Vroom mobile app!

**Vroom** is a mobile app designed to encourage back-and-forth interaction between children and parents.

The wonderful part of Vroom is that it supports actions parents already do with their children. Learning is a process for both the child and parent, and little steps are as important as big ones!

Vroom trusts that a child’s best teacher is you! Explore new ways to build brain-building connections during every-day activities with your child.

Daily Vroom is available in English and Spanish.

find out more  
[joinvroom.org](https://www.joinvroom.org)