Cognitive Load Theory

Information for parents and carers

Did you know?

SOCIAL AND COGNITIVE ENVIRONMENTS
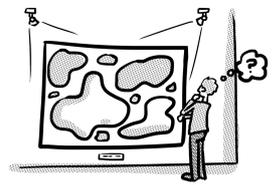
Cognitive load theory is a handy model to understand challenge and how to learn information which isn't too hard, or too easy, but just right. (Sweller 1998) Cognitive load is the amount of information our working memory can hold at any one time. The capacity of our working load is limited and therefore students can maximise their working memory by practising a range of strategies.

Research shows that strategies for reducing cognitive load can assist the human brain to learn and store knowledge, boost confidence and improve memory retention.

Further research has identified that reducing the cognitive load can reduce stress and anxiety and the feeling of being overwhelmed with tasks.

What can you do?

Support your child to try out strategies to reduce the cognitive load. Examples include:

- Breaking down problems into smaller parts. This reduces the problem space and lightens the cognitive load, making learning more effective.

- Helping them to understand worked examples in order to work out how to complete tasks.

- Encouraging them to take advantage of auditory and visual channels in their working memory and supporting them to create stories to help remember information in accessible chunks.

- Working with them to simplify information and build on it. Students should avoid overloading their brain with too much information at any one time.

The learning environment is crucial to reducing cognitive load. Help your child to create a calming environment to work in with as few distractions as possible. Encourage them to turn off their phone, music or the TV whilst revising or doing homework. Distractions only add to our working memory.

Help and encourage your child to review information from their lessons as they go along because this will help improve their retention, adding knowledge to their long-term memory. Help them get into a routine which works for them.

better future - brighter hope