

The Concrete Random Learning Style

“Things” tend to go far better when you are parenting a concrete random dominant child if you take an approach to leading them that is different from how you would approach other learning styles. The concrete random learner can make you dizzy, startle you, amaze you with their inventiveness, and make you laugh and cry in rapid succession. However, one thing is for sure: CRs are creative, dynamic people and so worth the ride they will take you on.

Someone once said that if you throw a cat in the air, he will always land on his feet. I think of this when I talk about CR kids. My son is a CR, and one of my favorite memories illustrates his ability to think on his feet, rapidly and charmingly. We had a rule in the house – that “shut up” was not allowed in conversation. I explained to the kids that shut up was strictly taboo because it was rude, and furthermore it showed a complete disregard for the other person’s need for self expression. One day when I was in the kitchen and the kids were upstairs, I heard my son yell “SHUT UP!” Startled, I started swiftly up the stairs only to halt midway as he continued equally loudly: “... *is NOT a word we use in this house!*” What could I say? He made his point to his sister, but when he heard me marching upstairs, he rapidly fixed it.

Characteristics of the Concrete Random Learner

- Solves problems creatively
- Hands-on
- Makes real but original products
- Self-directed, driven by what interests him
- Enjoys a variety both in environment and in what they work at
- Thinks on her feet
- Gets in and out of tight spots with equal ease
- Inspires action in others
- Charming, friendly, and charismatic
- Sees many options and many solutions to problems
- Can visualize future events
- Accepting of and caring for many kinds of people

- Risk taker

What Is Hard for Them

- Being told exactly what to do and how to do it
- Being told it can't be done
- Having to follow steps someone else made up
- Strict, inflexible routines
- Any routines
- Having to redo something once it is finished
- Formalities, formal reports, pomp, fads
- Completing long-term projects
- Pacing themselves and working within specific time frames
- Having to give up on something or someone
- Having to explain how they arrived at a solution or answer
- Having to choose only one option
- Locking themselves into something long term

Knee-jerk Reactions to the CR Learner

It is only natural when leading a CR to want to clamp down to “control” the innovative, unexpected actions. The interesting fact, however, is that the more we clamp down and try and control his actions, the more he will fight back. It is not that he is fighting us or the rules; he is fighting the suffocation of having his freedom taken away. It is often hardest for the concrete sequential adult to embrace the CR because to the CS, “the right way to do it” is paramount. To the concrete sequential, the concrete random isn't doing things the accepted way, and rather than perceiving the CR as innovative and experiential, he may perceive him as rebellious.

Strategies for Home

- State the goal clearly and let him come up with the steps to attain it. For instance, “You can go to bed any time you want, just so lights are out at 8:00.” “You don't have a curfew as long as you come in at a sensible time.” Later, “I won't make rules for you, as long as you make wise choices for yourself.”

- Encourage her to evaluate music, movies, and books rather than stating what she can or cannot read, watch or listen to. Spend time discussing those things together without being didactic.
- Give him ample opportunity to make choices early in life when choices are less life-altering. I said “We need a lawnmower. This is the budget. It should be self-propelled so your sister or I can also use it. Go pick any one you want that meets these criteria.” There was no risk to me in asking Matthew to make this purchase. It was a perfect way to encourage him to make an important decision – he knew the goal, and he got to hear the magical words “any one you want.”
- Let her make mistakes and learn from those mistakes while still young and at home rather than choosing for her all the time in order to prevent a less desired outcome. Remember that the CR needs to find out first hand whenever possible.
- Determine that your relationship with him is paramount and maintain it at all costs. Determine to stay with him as he learns about his world and what will happen if he tries this or that.

Strategies for the Classroom

- Be very clear about what you really want from this child. If you want him to be good at following directions or if you want him to do his homework every night, I’m not so sure how it will go. If, however, your goal is that he learn the material, you might remain open to how he learns it. Homework every night might not be the most productive for him. Make a deal (CRs LOVE making deals!) that as long as he shows he knows the stuff he won’t have to do his homework. I can pretty well guarantee he will learn the material perfectly!
- Don’t insist that it can only be done one way. This is like saying “sic ‘m” to a bull dog. Clearly state the goal, show an example of a project or problem done correctly (as to the answer) and while you can show the child how you would do it, don’t insist she follow the steps exactly. Give her room to create something new. Rather than always insisting on a written paper, make room for other ways to show learning such as interviewing a classmate, making a tangible project, creating a poster that will show all the points of learning – or better yet, ask her to create a product that will showcase all she knows.
- Offer a variety of projects rather than specifying exactly how the project should be done. For instance, it is totally safe to say, “You are required to do a science project” as long as you also say, “You are totally free to choose the topic and how it looks.” Next you can also say, “There should be these particular components included so I know you understand the learning piece.” What the CR will hear first is the phrase “totally free” and as long as you say that, you can also stipulate what you need him to do.
- Be open to challenge without taking it personally. Remember, if you think something has to be done one way, be certain your CR students will immediately set out to show you the

myriad ways it also can be done. Remember you are dealing with creative thinkers who thrive on original ideas, original products, and who just really need to find out for themselves “what will happen if I do this” and “How many ways can this be done?” The more black and white (sequential) you are in your approach in the classroom, the more you will inspire your CR students to be very colorful (random).