Experience Books: How to Make Them

Adapted from Topic 20 of SKI*HI’s Communication Interactions

Children enjoy things as they happen. They live in the here and now. As you participate in an activity, communicate with your child about what you are doing, seeing, hearing and feeling.

Then help your child make the activity even more meaningful and begin to help him or her to develop recall for past events. You can start by having your child draw or make pictures about the event that can go into the child’s own experience book. Your child then can relive these events at a later date as he or she reviews the pictures. Parents can work on modelling, turn-taking, new vocabulary and sentence structures as they discuss the pictures with their child.

An experience book is highly motivating because it is about the child! It provides strong incentives for the child to learn the vocalizations, words and phrases associated with the meaningful events as you review the events over and over.

Examples of experience book entries

- **Emotional experiences**: Feeling sad in the hospital, being angry at brother, falling down and hurting self, being excited about a new puppy.
- **Special Days**: birthdays, holidays, family outings, grandma and grandpa visiting.
- **Fun, interesting daily events**: making a sandwich, popcorn, jell-o or cookies, weeding the garden, washing the car, changing sheets, feeding the dog.
- **Changes or achievements in the child’s life**: moving to a new house, going to school for the first time, riding a tricycle for the first time, learning how to hop.
- **Anticipated future events**: going to grandma’s, going to the beach, the zoo, doctor, audiologist, shopping. *(What will you see?)*
- **Events involving social or hygiene skills**: learn about appropriate social or hygiene skills such as eating dinner before dessert, sitting down quietly in Sunday School, or washing hands before eating.
EXAMPLES OF THINGS TO USE FOR EXPERIENCE STORIES

- Make simple drawings about the event (like stick-figure drawings of your child bumping his or her knee).
- Cut pictures related to the event (like picture of jell-o from the box when you made jello.)
- Glue or tape objects associated with the event on the page (like popsicle sticks, a popped balloon, band aid, leaves or candy wrappers.)
- Of course, photographs.

Example of Experience Books:

- **Helen cut her foot and went to the hospital and had 1-2-3 stitches and a bandage:**
  - Brrrr! Cold but mmm
  - Ouch!

- **Mommy + Helen Planted flowers:**
  - My popsicle stick
  - I love ice cream
  - real seeds

- **Saturday Made pancakes:**
  - Daddy
  - Helen

- **Helen gets to crack the eggs:**

**STEPS:**

1. Select items to put in the experience book. See samples below.
2. Glue or tape objects associated with the event on a page.
3. Write a brief description of the event. Make sure to write down the vocalizations, words, and phrases associated with the event.
4. Put the page into a binder or a cardboard cover with rings.
5. Read the descriptions (narratives) and discuss the entries frequently with your child.