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Memory recall and reflecting on learning

Points to note

- Most children with autism can easily recall established facts and general knowledge. They may have excellent rote memories.
- According to some theories, many learning difficulties experienced by children with autism arise from their failure to develop an experience 'of self'. It is as if they have difficulty experiencing events as happening to themselves; as if they are watching a video of life. This lack of experiencing self has a profound effect on the child's ability to process information.
- The child may have difficulty accessing and retrieving memories without a specific cue. The child may not have a meaningful framework in which to link events and personal memories.
- The child may have difficulty responding to open questions, such as "What did you do on the weekend?" but may be able to answer questions when given alternatives, such as, "Did you go the park or the beach on the weekend?"

What you can do

- Be aware of the child's difficulties with open questions, only use these if you feel he will be able to give a correct response. Otherwise, ask questions that give him a cue as to the correct response.
- There are several strategies to try that may help children with autism to memorise specific information.

These include:

1. when talking about experiences, discuss the child's personal response, ie. how he felt and what he was thinking. Most children will need assistance to identify these feelings,
 2. working the information into a diagram or picture form,
 3. helping the child to establish links between new information and information he already knows.
- When a new skill has been learnt it is helpful to reflect on this learning before moving on.
This can be done by;
 - identifying key points,
 - asking the child to clearly state what he thinks he has learnt,
 - make connections between what has been learnt and prior knowledge in the subject,
 - make a judgment about how this new skill or information will be useful in future.