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Transfer of learned skills

Points to note

- The child may be very rigid in his way of thinking. He may have great difficulty transferring the skills learnt in one setting to another, similar setting.
- Problems with memory recall lead to difficulty searching the memory for useful information. Unless specifically cued, a child with autism may lack the ability to spontaneously search his memory for knowledge that can be transferred to a new situation.
- The child may be unable to display certain skills at school yet he can perform them independently at home, or vice versa.
- This inability to generalise skills can be a big problem if the child's teacher is unaware of just how rigid the child can be.

What you can do

- It is important to always generalise what is being taught with a range of examples and situations. Children with autism need to be given the opportunity to learn the same thing in different situations.
- For example if you are discussing the types of houses that people live in, you would show pictures of detached houses, old and modern houses, high rise apartments, flats, huts and even igloos. In money maths, show how 50 cents can be made up from a number of coins of different amounts.
- If the child learns to add using blocks, he will need to practice this skill with a range of practical examples in different settings before he is taught more complex ideas.
- There needs to be good communication between home and school. Keep a record of skill development in a Communication Book and send it home with the child each day. Newly acquired skills can then be practiced at home.
- When a new skill has been learnt, reflect on the learning experience by talking about what has been learnt and how this skill might be used in the future.
- The child needs to be given the opportunity to enjoy what he has learnt. Reflect on the child's achievement, pointing out that he is happy, proud etc.