

Making learning fun for children: IITian shows how it's done

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HOW can learning be made an enjoyable process for children?

Ask IITian Arvind Gupta. "Rather than teach children, say about a rectangle or a rhombus or the structure of methane through textbooks, if we teach them using old rubber tubes, valves and matchsticks, they are more likely to enjoy it," Gupta said at the launch of Sahyadri Hospital's Child Guidance Centre (CGC) on Sunday.

The CGC has been trying to help children and adolescents — with clinical as well as non-clinical problems — by adopting an interdisciplinary approach to combine cognitive, behavioral and family system theories to learning methods.

The major areas CGC is focusing are preventive mental health, performance in school, healing programmes, academic training and documentation, and psychometric assessment, among other things.

CGC co-ordinator Radhika S Bapat



ARVIND GUPTA

said, "We have programmes from 9 am to 1 pm for children with clinical problems like Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, Autistic Spectrum Disorders, emotional and behavioral problems. After 1 pm, we have sessions to enhance cognitive abilities of children through games, art and craft and other activity based interactive learning methods. We are looking at cost-effective options for toys and have plans for conducting indigenous story telling and drama workshops."

During a demonstration to make toys from trash, Gupta said, "Soon after passing IIT Kanpur, I realised I'm not cut out for making trucks. Tinkering with toys

was more fun. Though most of the toys that I make use simple applications of scientific principles, I prefer calling them toys rather than science models as the moment the word 'science' is used most children get scared."

Speaking at the function, Malavika Kapur from the National Institute of Advanced Studies, Bangalore, said the notion of perfection parents often have hamper a child's natural development. Parents want children to make a neat Ganesha and fail to appreciate a squiggle made by them. But if an artist does the same, adults call it abstract art.

She added, "Learning from children what to teach them is the best way to interact with them. While working with some children in a village near Mysore, I realised that while adults think they know what is best for kids, they really can prove adults wrong. Before we could tell children how to play with tennikoit rings and frisbees, they showed us more than 10 methods they devised within the fraction of a second."