

Building Learning Power

What is Building Learning Power?

Lifelong learning is our birthright. We can continually develop our capacity to learn in new and challenging circumstances throughout our life. In the developing field of learning to learn, research suggests that there are several broad dispositions that we need to develop in order to become successful lifelong learners.

Professor Guy Claxton suggests that there are four key learning dispositions:

- **Resilience**
- **Reflectiveness**
- **Resourcefulness**
- **Reciprocity/social relationships**

These dispositions are inherent in all of us. They are not fixed at birth, or when we leave school. They can be developed in everyone regardless of current ability or age. There are no limits to extending our learning power. We have introduced these dispositions to the children as groups of learning muscles. Just as we can build our physical muscles by the right kind of exercise, we can also exercise our learning muscles to develop strength and stamina.

Developing the dispositions that make for success as a lifelong learner equates to achieving a good level of all-round learning fitness. Each of the 4R's is made up of a number of learning behaviours, which we call **learning capacities**. These are summarised below. Because learning capacities are specific in nature, they can be individually trained, nurtured and exercised.

Resilience is:

Being ready, willing and able to lock into learning. Knowing how to work through difficulties when the pressure mounts or going gets tough.

Absorption – the pleasure of being engrossed in learning.

Managing Distractions – recognising and reducing interruptions.

Noticing – concentrating hard and really sensing what's out there in learning.

Perseverance – not giving up when learning is hard, understanding the feelings of learning when things are a challenge.

Resourcefulness is:

Being ready, willing and ready to learn in different ways – using both internal and external resources effectively, calling on different ways of learning as appropriate:

Questioning – asking questions of yourself and others. Being curious, playing with situations and delving beneath the surface of things.

Making Links – making connections between consolidated and new learning – building patterns and weaving a web of understanding.

Imagining – using the mind’s eye as a learning tool – using your imagination – wondering ‘what if’

Reasoning – calling up your logical and rational skills to work things out methodically and rigorously. Constructing good arguments.

Capitalising – Making good use of and drawing on a full range of resources from school and the wider world.

Reflectiveness is:

Being ready and willing to become more strategic about learning – taking a longer term view by planning, taking stock and drawing out your experiences as a learner to get the best out of yourself. Your reflectiveness is made up of:

Planning – working out learning in advance. Planning learning.

Revising – monitoring and adapting along the way. Being flexible, changing your plans, monitoring and reviewing your learning

Distilling – drawing out the lessons from experience. Looking at what has been learned – pulling out essential features – carrying them forward to aid future learning. Being your own learning coach.

Meta learning – knowing yourself as a learner – how you learn best. How to talk about the learning process

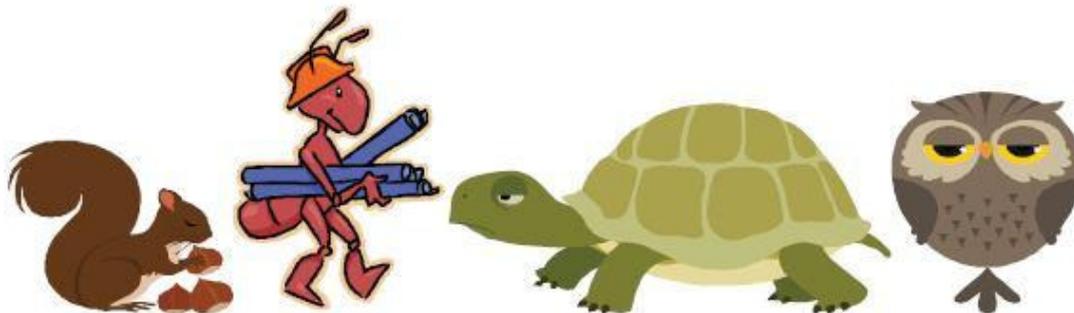
Reciprocity/social relationships is:

Interdependence – knowing when it’s appropriate to learn on your own or with others, and being able to put your view across in class discussions and circle times.

Collaboration – the skills of learning with others. Respecting and recognising other points of view. Adding to and drawing from the strength of teams.

Empathy and Listening – contributing to others’ experiences by listening to them to understand what they are really saying, and putting yourself in their shoes

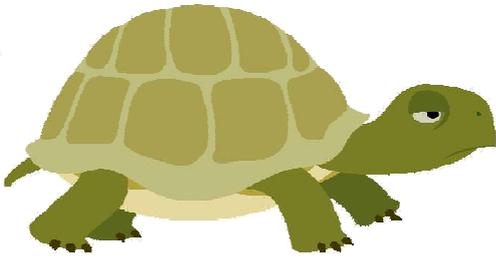
Imitation – constructively adopting methods of learning, picking up habits and values from other people whom you observe.



We use these *Learning Power friends* to help our young learners to understand the four R’s.

Learning Power Friends

Tough Tortoise: resilience



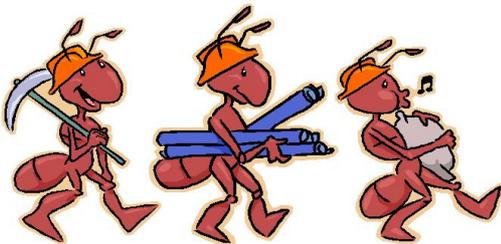
- I enjoy getting involved in learning.
- I don't get distracted.
- I look closely and notice things.
- I stick at a task which helps me to learn.

Wise Owl: reflectiveness



- I plan what to do.
- I change my plans if things don't work.
- I learn from experience.
- I understand how to learn.

Team Ant: reciprocity



- I can learn alone or with others.
- I work well with other people.
- I think about what others are thinking.
- I learn by doing what others do.

Sensible Squirrel: resourcefulness



- I use things around me to help.
- I ask questions to find out more.
- I make links and connections between things.
- I use methods to work things out.
- I like to wonder and ask 'what if...'

