



PARENT NEWSLETTER

DECEMBER 2019

KEEPING YOUR CHILD MOTIVATED

Do you agree or disagree with the following? Check the statements you believe are true.

- Abilities are not fixed at birth. We can develop them through practice.
- Habits, like self-control and working hard, are also built through practice.
- You can help your child develop both: strong abilities and lasting habits.
- The more your children achieve, the more they will want to achieve. You are setting up a circle: when your children work hard and get good results, they'll want to work harder still.

Most good students aren't born good learners. Yes, individual personality plays a big part in a child's willingness to learn and their overall ability when it comes to school, but most children who are good learners had to learn how to become good learners at some point. More importantly, any student, who has the right attitude and wants to learn, and receives the right motivation, can become a good learner.

If you have a child who is struggling in school and doesn't seem to be motivated, the first thing you want to do is explore whether there is some obstacle getting in the way. Learning disabilities, social challenges, and attention or emotional problems can all cause your child to lose interest in school or in other activities. But not all kids who are underperforming in school have a problem. In some cases, children just need to be motivated to complete their tasks.

Motivation is the desire to do something. Research shows that people, including children, can influence their own levels of motivation and self-control. There are two types of motivation:

EXTRINSIC MOTIVATION

Doing something for external rewards or to avoid negative consequences. Examples:

- Reading a book to prepare for a test
- Exercising to lose weight
- Cleaning your home to prepare for visitors coming over
- Playing a sport because you know you will get a trophy



INTRINSIC MOTIVATION

Doing something because you enjoy it or find it interesting. Examples:

- Reading a book because you enjoy the storytelling
- Exercising because you want to relieve stress
- Cleaning your home because it helps you feel organized
- Playing a sport because it makes you feel good



While both types of motivation are important, your child is more likely to dedicate time to study and practice if s/he is intrinsically motivated – that is, if s/he finds the topic of study interesting or enjoyable. Here are some tips to increase your child's intrinsic motivation:

- **Praise effort rather than success or abilities.** If you tell children they are smart, they sometimes begin to think that everything should come easy, and when they do not, they give up easily. On the other hand, praising them for their efforts builds confidence in their ability to work hard for something that is important to them.
- **Point out progress.** Attention spans are short in young children, so pointing out milestones they are reaching along the way can be helpful in showing them how far they've come. Feeling successful will help a child feel motivated to reach the next goal.
- **Encourage independence by offering choices and encourage problem solving.** Instead of telling your child what to do all the time, give him/her some options. This will encourage your child to work through problems independently (and feel like an adult).



- **Set realistic expectations.** When your child sets goals he or she can achieve, it encourages him/her to continue to succeed. Demanding tasks that aren't reasonable, however, can cause your child to feel overwhelmed and like a failure.
- **Recognize the good things your kids are doing and praise them on that rather than focusing on their shortcomings.** Correcting poor behavior comes more naturally to a lot of us parents but celebrating good behavior or positive choices can be more rewarding or motivating for your child.
- **Limit extrinsic motivators.** While it may be hard to limit rewards, this will benefit them in the long run. You want your child to feel motivated to do something rather than feeling encouraged by external regards like prizes or gifts.

ADDITIONAL TIPS FOR MOTIVATING YOUR CHILD

- **Get involved** in your child's activities, schoolwork, and interests. If you can't physically be present, ask about their interests inside and outside of school.
- **Help your child see the big picture.** Remind him/her of short- and long-term goals, so they can keep their eyes on the prize.
- **Let your child make mistakes.** Mistakes are a valuable part of learning. Remind your child of this and let him/her know that mistakes are to be expected – they make us better and more successful.
- **Get outside help.** Feel free to reach out to family, friends, and school staff for support. If your child has an older sibling or friends, ask for their help as this can ease some of the tension you might feel as a parent.
- **Make your child's teacher your ally.** One of the most important things you can do for your child is to work with his/her teacher. The teacher might have additional insight about how to motivate your child, their interests, challenges, etc.
- **Communicate openly** with your child and encourage honest dialogue about interests, challenges, experiences, etc

FAMILY FUN AROUND THE HOLIDAYS!

Around the holidays, there are lots of fun activities you can do with your child and the entire family, especially when everyone is home. Consider the following:

- **Go to the library or visit a bookstore.** If you have a library card, take advantage of it. Go to the library as a family and read together or check out some books. You can also spend a day or a few hours at a local bookstore to see what it has to offer. Even if you decide not to buy anything, you can read the books while you are there.
- **Have a treasure hunt.** Create a treasure map with clues to find random items or goodies you have hidden somewhere around your home or outdoors. It doesn't have to be expensive or big — any little treat will be exciting to find, especially when you involve the entire family and friends.
- **Make your own games.** Get a supply of colored cards/paper, children's scissors, glue, markers/crayons, and anything else you may want to include in your game. Games are a great way to keep your child busy and to get their creative juices flowing.

21ST CENTURY SKILLS: CRITICAL THINKING



In this issue, we are going to discuss critical thinking. Critical thinking is all about problem solving. It also requires your child to be able to question things and find evidence to defend or reject their own or other people's ideas. We don't always appreciate it when our children ask us "why," but this is an important 21st century skill they will need to succeed, no matter what they do. You can help build your child's critical thinking skills by doing the following:

- Analyze information together by matching, sorting, or organizing details
- Identify and gather important facts when solving problems
- Encourage your child to test out different solutions to a problem before choosing the best one
- Help your child use their prior knowledge to make sense of new situations or problems – what do they know already that can help them make sense of the new problem or situation?

TECH TALK

Research suggests that teaching your child how to think critically is one of the best things you can do for him/her. When children can think critically, it means in addition to memorizing and spitting out details, they can also take information and apply it in different ways. Here are some apps and games you can play at home with your child to help foster critical thinking skills.

- **Mind Meister** is an app that develops your child's critical thinking skills by helping them to see how different topics relate to each other, break complex ideas into smaller ones, collaborate with others, and take notes, among other things.
- **FlowChart Games** help your child to learn about different topics, including the moon, food chains, photosynthesis, and parts of the human body. The user is given an incomplete flowchart representing a specific topic. S/he then drags and drops the missing elements of the flowchart to the right position. This helps students to learn about sequencing, cause and effect, and how multiple small elements make up a large process or phenomenon.

BRAIN TEASER: REBUS PUZZLES

A rebus puzzle is a picture puzzle that includes a hidden word or a common phrase. See if you can solve these six!

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