



Did You Know...?

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About the Motivated Child

Parents Reaching Out connects with families, schools and communities in New Mexico. We offer information from many reliable sources. We thank the Parent Education Network, a project of Parents Helping Parents of Wyoming, Inc. for permitting us to share their PEN Notes publications in this information series.

Motivation is the sense of need or desire that prompts children to do their best.

There are many ways to encourage our children to be self-motivated.

Seven guidelines for encouraging self-motivation:

1. Express confidence in your children's abilities.
2. Help your children see that they are competent to perform a stated task. Children who trust their own abilities feel that they make a difference.
3. Involve children of all ages in family decision-making. Children gain an internal belief that their choices do make a difference.
4. Encourage your children to serve others. Kids who believe they can make a difference in the world have an enormous sense of personal power.
5. Reinforce the message of "the power of one" to make a difference, using real-life stories of people who have overcome adversity or changed the lives of others.
6. Help your children understand natural rewards such as feeling a sense of accomplishment.
7. Set a good example. If you strive to do things by being motivated and self-disciplined, children will notice.



Source: Rathvon, N., The Unmotivated Child.

We can ask, beg, bribe and demand that our kids work harder, but will that ensure that our kids are motivated do their best when they are on their own? Ultimately, motivation has to come from within the child. To be self-motivated, children must feel that they really can make a difference.

Highly motivated kids have three qualities:

1. They feel that they have control over many things that happen to them.
2. They believe that their life has a purpose.
3. They are optimistic about their own future.

Types of motivation from the outside in (extrinsic).

These can actually discourage self-motivation.

- Paying your child to learn by giving money, rewards or excessive praise.
- Making a deal such as “If you will do this, I will.....”.
- Begging or forcing a child to work harder or to do better.
- Fixing the child’s problems for him.
- Allowing the child to avoid taking responsibility for her actions and to blame those around her.

Source: Benson, P.L., What Kids Need to Succeed.



Barriers to inner-motivation:

1. Nothing I do really matters.
2. Someone else will do it for me.
3. Why try, I will just be criticized.
4. I don’t know how to do it.
5. I am never going to be able to understand this.
6. No matter how hard I study, I am still going to flunk. I don’t care. (This really means, “I’m feeling so poorly about myself that it is safer not to care”.)

Types of motivation from the inside out (intrinsic).

These activities will help build a sense of “learning is fun”.

- Tap into your child’s interests and passions, and try to connect them to what he is learning at school.
- Model lifelong learning. Show an on-going interest in learning new things, making new discoveries, and exploring new topics.
- Clearly communicate to your children that you value learning.
- Affirm and encourage achievement in diverse areas as students discover their own interests and capabilities.
- Make learning a family affair. Learn more together about your children’s favorite subjects.

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