



PERSONAL ACHIEVEMENT

Find out how you can motivate your child to achieve in school.

Scientists and Psychologists who have studied human motivation have agreed on one thing for sure. All human behaviour is the result of motivation to fulfil a need that we have.

Another way to think of that is to acknowledge that if a person repeats a particular behaviour, then it is because that behaviour results in a need being fulfilled either consciously or sub-consciously.

Is it then not also true that some behaviours occur repeatedly because a need is not being fulfilled and the person is trying get that need fulfilled?

Let's relate this to the area of school achievement. Most parents want their children to do well in school. They want them to get good grades and also to get along well socially. So you would think that most parents would be encouraging those behaviours from their children.

However parents often inadvertently fail to recognize the power they have in terms of motivating their children to do well in school.

Almost all children want their parent's attention. They will go to elaborate lengths to get that attention and they really do not have the maturity to discern that 'negative attention' is not actually what they want.

In fact, some children have learned that in order to get your sustained and undivided attention all they have to do is 'be naughty' or 'under-achieve'. They learn that the best way to get your attention is to do poorly.

Now most parents will not actually recognize that they are rewarding the very behaviours that are undesirable. This is because they haven't stopped and identified their role in the entire process in a 'pro-active' way.

If you want your child to do as well in school as his/her ability possibly permits, then you need to be the one that makes that happen and manages the way in which you motivate your child to achieve.

Here are 6 steps you can take to make sure that your child's performance at school is maximised:

1. Reward and praise 'effort' not achievement or outcomes.

Your conversation about 'performance and achievement' should reflect that you value the 'EFFORT' more than the outcome. Your child may or may not be a 'brainiac', so be careful to not emphasize A's and B's only. Of course the older your child gets the more important the grades become, but your reaction to your child's achievements, great and small should always recognize their effort more than their actual achievement.

This is so important, because a person cannot perform at a level better than their best at any given time. Much of what your child learns at Elementary School depends on their level of maturity and development. There are a lot of reasons a child may not get a good result in a test. It can be as simple as they were distracted by something such as a headache, the argument they heard you have last night, the rumbling in their tummy or a myriad of other things that can interfere with their concentration.

2. Help your child remain 'Encouraged'.

Just know that at school, your child needs to remain 'encouraged'. That is your number one objective. If your child loses heart and begins to think that their efforts will not pay off, then they will stop making those efforts. And remember encouragement is something that children need 'topping-up' in almost all the time. Not just one time a day, either. But many times a day.

Your job is to give your child the courage to keep trying.

3. Genuinely 'Praise' your child:

You cannot praise what you don't notice and you cannot notice something if you are not looking. So you need to look for things to praise. Praise effort above all. Effort exists where things are not easy. So look for areas where your child is expressing difficulty. Listen to what they are saying to you. 'I hate math' usually means 'I am struggling with math'. 'I don't like Suzie anymore' usually means your daughter is having difficulty with Suzie.

So if you want to know what to praise, look for where your child is discouraged or not happy.

4. Ask your child questions that show you are interested.

Questioning is one of the most powerful tools at your disposal as a parent. Learn to ask questions that show you are not only interested, but have actually 'noticed' and 'spent time

thinking about' your child. Be careful to not express your opinion as you will be putting words in your child's mouth. Your goal here is not to feel better about your parenting, but to BE a better parent so your child can feel better about themselves.

Here's some ways to question your child:

- Oh,
you don't like Suzie anymore? I thought something was going on there, 'cos I noticed you haven't mentioned her this week. (Key motivating words: 'I noticed'. Represents that you value the child enough to notice the details of their day and this encourages your child).

I know you are a 'good friend' so I am thinking Suzie will be missing you. (Key motivating words: 'I know you are a good friend'. Constitutes praise and encourages your child).

Is there anything I can do? (Key motivation comes from the knowledge that the parent thinks there may be a solution to the problem and also that the parent is supportive of helping the child with the solution without dictating what it is, thereby crediting the child very subtly with having some skills of their own, too).

Another example,

- Oh
you hate math? That's odd, 'cos I noticed how good you are at some parts of math. (Key motivating words: 'I noticed' and 'how good you are'. Your child will begin to think of which parts of math they are actually good at, instead of focusing on the part that is discouraging them right now. They may 'borrow' your belief in them, to spur them on to feel more confident).

'So help me understand what your favourite topics in Math are. Help me know why you like those topics. And then tell me what your least favourite topics are and help me know why you don't like them. (Key motivating words: 'help me understand', 'tell me'. Your child will enjoy that you are actually listening to them).

The phrase 'Help me understand' is so much better than 'explain', because 'explain' sounds like a demand, whereas 'help me understand' sounds and feels more like you need their help and it is a request. It also suggests that you feel like it's important and you don't assume that you already know the answer (even if you think you do).

Your child may struggle at first, but resist the urge to finish their sentences for them. If they cannot express themselves in words, then tell them that you will put aside some time and they can show you, or let them know the subject is open and you really want to know so that

they can come back to you in a little while and help you understand their feelings and what has happened to discourage them.

5. Praise them for communicating with you.

This is so important as it enables your child to see that you and they are in partnership and not working against one another. Remember, they want your attention and will do what it takes to get it.

6. Decide to give lots of positive attention and try to skip the negative attention.

Since you are trying to motivate your child to have a sense of 'Personal Achievement' you must not lose sight of that goal. Do not focus on what they do poorly. They may mistake that negative attention as 'better than no attention'.

Remember their need for your attention. Know that when they are at school, they are thinking constantly about you, both consciously and subconsciously and they are motivated by the need for your love and attention.

If you want your child to experience the joy of personal achievement, you have to be conscious of how you reward their behaviours both positive and negative. Be aware of your power to motivate your child and never under-estimate their need for your attention.

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