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How parents can increase motivation and confidence in children- Part 2 Andrew Fuller

One of the characteristics of most kids that I secretly admire is, if they don't see a point to doing something they won't do it. End of story.

Given that some of them can be incredibly hard to convince, persuade, cajole, entice, or lure into anything, this can make motivating them a tricky business.

Even at the best of times, motivation is a slippery customer. Sometimes your child will have it in abundance & other times, it sneaks off & goes missing in action.

This is where dopamine- the neurochemical of motivation enters the picture.

The most important thing to know is that not feeling motivated hasn't really got much to do with motivation. It has more to do with feeling anxious & worried. In fact this is the formula:

Fear + Worry = Loss of Motivation

Motivation has a lot to do with overcoming their fears. Your child's fears loom larger if we try to help them avoid them.

This is where parenting gets really tricky. No one wants to see their child upset or distressed at the prospect of having to do something they really, really, really don't want to do BUT if we let them slide out of too many things their fears build and their confidence decreases.

The most powerful motivation techniques.

Build on your child's learning strengths & forget about their weaknesses.

Most people are not good at everything. They don't have to be. Success in life is about doing more of what you are good at & less of the things you are not good at. Serena Williams is not well known because she can do Mathematics, Einstein wasn't well known because he played soccer. When you focus on the things your child finds more enjoyable & interesting at school, even the things they find harder become easier.

How Parents Can Help

Assess your child's learning strengths at www.mylearningstrengths.com & develop a starting point from their top learning strength. Building from a learning strength area they already feel confident in will help them to overcome their worries or fears. Starting with what is easiest builds momentum & motivation.

If their strongest learning strength is:

Spatial Reasoning-start with by drawing & linking main ideas

Perceptual- Motor Skills- start with by linking their learning with physical movements.

Concentration and memory – convert their learning into a memory game.

Planning and sequencing – make a detailed plan for their learning & put the tasks to be completed into order.

Thinking and logic – evaluate the pros & cons of learning

People smarts -think about people who will be impressed if they succeed. Think about the lives of people they admire.

Language and word smarts – create a story about the key pieces of information they need to learn.

Number smarts – find ways to integrate thinking in numbers with the information they are learning about.

Use the full personalised learning success plan from the website to help you to do this.

Set small goals and one large one.

For each subject at school set a small goal each week. For example a goal might read & understand one chapter. Write the goal down somewhere. When you have achieved that goal give it a tick.

Decide to make their favourite subject at school the one to “go for broke in”. In this subject the aim is to do really well. Success has a way of becoming contagious.

Get organised

If your child is in the senior years of school try to convince them disable social media in the lead up to exams. Help them get yup to date. If they have fallen behind in any subject, have a working bee to catch up. They may need to ask others to help. Encourage them to ask teachers to help you by saying something like, *‘I lost motivation for a while in this subject but now I’d really like to catch up.’*

If they have not been in the practice of making notes, start. If they feel embarrassed about asking questions in class, set a goal of asking one question per class. If that is too embarrassing, encourage them to ask the teacher after class. If they’ve missed notes, ask for copies of them.

Work with them to write a revision summary for each subject to date, topic by topic.

If their study area has become a mess, clean it up.

Use post-it notes to organise the steps towards a successful outcome. On the first post-it note write the successful outcome they have in mind for that subject. Write the step before that & the step before that. Then write the first step they could take.

No one would enter a marathon without doing a series of shorter training runs first and the same thing applies to doing well at school. Regaining motivation is a step by step process.

Most people who feel unmotivated think everyone else knows more, is more talented, is smarter and has a lot more brains than they are.

My research shows that most students have absolutely no idea how well they are going to do at school so don’t believe their negative self-talk or predictions of failure.

It is highly likely that they are more intelligent than they realise. They certainly have learning strengths they are yet to discover. It is also highly likely that most of their classmates are not quite as advanced or as organised as they appear to be.

Use the time in school well.

Many students muck around in school & then wonder why they have to do so much work outside of school. Consider asking your child to sit towards the front in class. If they can focus & listen well while at school, they can save endless hours. This is valuable time that can be used for hanging out with friends & having fun.

Have an honest discussion.

If your child has been unmotivated they may have done anything to avoid doing the study time. The world is full of excuses that we can all make: *“The dog needs a walk”*,

"I have to finish this game & then I'll study", "I'll have a nap & study when I wake up".

We have to be tough enough on ourselves to do the work BEFORE we do the video games/ TV watching/chat room messaging etc.

Also be honest enough to admit to that lying in bed, with the computer on, listening to music, with YouTube in the background & messenger open to chat with friends, is not & will never be, studying. Have some study time sitting up at a desk or table with NO electronic distractions on.

Change your routine

If you've been finding it difficult to get your child motivated, change their set pattern. For example, study in a local library rather than at home or change the room you will study in. Just as you learn to surf best by surfing, you learn to succeed in exams & essays by giving your undivided attention to your study. Practice in the same conditions you intend to perform in. There won't be electronics & music in the exam room.

Why we should you care?

Your child might be able to dismiss all of the above points by saying, *'I can't do it'* or *'I can't be bothered'* or *'This sucks.'* That is just the part of them that is scared that is talking them out of it. The scared part thinks that if they try & fail, it will be much worse than never having tried in the first place.

Think about what would happen if they applied this type of thinking to the whole of their life. They wouldn't learn music & start a band because U2, Pink & Beyoncé have already done it. They wouldn't talk to someone they like because they would be rejected. They wouldn't go to a place they would really like because it would probably disappoint them. They wouldn't live the life they could live because they would lack the daring & courage.

Give up fear and gain motivation

You know the No.1 fear of all time?
Death? No.

Speaking in public? No.

The number one fear that people have is that other people will think badly of them. And you know what the biggest, saddest joke about that fear is?

Most people don't think about other people much at all. Most people are so busy or so focused on themselves that haven't got the interest or the energy to judge whether you are good at something or not.

So, there is a risk that your child could throw away a really successful, enjoyable life by worrying about something that doesn't even exist. So as Yoda in Star Wars said, *'There is only do or not do.'* It is up to them. But don't make what other people might think of you if you stuff up, a reason for giving up on yourself.

So why listen to me?

I spend a lot of my time talking to adults who gave up on themselves at school & spend their lives doing boring jobs that don't pay very well.

I also spend even more of my time talking to students who have done really well in school after not being thought of as clever, or talented, or gifted or smart in any way. These students have taught me the ingredients of success. Now you have them too. What you do with them is up to you. Good luck.

More information

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Andrew's website

www.mylearningstrengths.com has helped over 100,000 young people in the past year discover their learning strengths.

Linked in

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Learning Strengths

Books for Parents

Unlocking Your Child's Genius

Tricky Behaviours

The A to Z of Feelings (Amba Press)

Book for Teachers

Neurodevelopmental Differentiation- Optimising Brain Systems To Maximise Learning (Amba Press).

