

Motivating Your Child

Research shows that for achieving success, motivation often plays a larger role than one's natural ability. Those who are motivated are more likely to take risks, to utilize coping strategies, and to stay with tasks until completion. Below are tips on how to motivate your child to become successful in school and in life:



PARENTING MATTERS

Graziella Simonetti

1 Set appropriate expectations

Children are usually aware of how you view them. If your expectations are high, they will typically work to meet them. If your expectations are low, they will adjust their actions to meet that expectation. While you want to set high expectations, aim for them to be reasonable. Have an open and continued dialogue with teachers to assess the capabilities of your child and what goals are appropriate.

general goals such as "Bob will do better in Math" and make it specific such as "Bob will improve his grade from a B- to a B+." Below each goal, provide concrete steps that your child can take to achieve the goal, such as A) Attend extra help each week B) Do practice problems 15 minutes every night.

3 Show that YOU care about school

Attend meetings, programs, and events at your child's school. Build a relationship with your child's teacher. Keep up with what assignments are due and what your child is learning. Create a comfortable and productive work space in your home where your child can focus on homework and projects.

2 Set goals

When goals are written out, they are more likely to be achieved. Brainstorm goals with your child and post them in a place that they are likely to see them. Avoid



Nelly with her daughters Nora, 11, Nicole, 14, and her husband Anthony.

4 Praise process not product

Praise the effort your child puts into the work more than you praise the final grade. Children will be more motivated if praised for what they can control (effort, decision making, attitude) versus what they cannot (such as intelligence or athletic skills). Children praised for their intelligence instead of for the effort they put forth often become overly concerned with results and become less motivated following a failure. When praised for effort, they tend to equate any failure to a lack of effort which they can alter. They will be more likely to take academic and personal risks.



As program director at LBLCA, Nelly coordinates services to assist students.

What would be the best way to get your homework done and still give you time to play?"

6 Let kids fail

While being protective of children is a natural instinct for parents, it can be helpful to allow children to experience failure from time to time. It is not, so much, the experience of failure that is important as it is the experience of bouncing back from failure. Be supportive of and emotionally responsive to your children as they experience the failure, and problem-solve around what can be done differently next time.

Graziella Simonetti is a parent educator for EAC Network's Long Island Parenting Institute and works as a social worker for the NYC Department of Education. Visit www.eacinc.org/long-island-parenting-institute for more information.

5 Invite children to problem solve

Kids are more invested in the outcomes of problems when they are part of creating the solution. They show more investment towards solutions that they have suggested than towards the ones that parents provide. Ask for ideas on how to resolve issues: "When I ask you to do your homework when you get home, you get angry. You have to get your homework done."



A watercolor painting of Long Beach boardwalk by Nelly

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