

# RESILIENT KIDS

NEWSLETTER by Michael Grose - Australia's leading parenting educator

## Motivating children to learn

*Children can achieve just about anything if they are motivated enough, yet they will learn very little if motivation is missing.*

Some children are internally motivated. They are hard-wired to try their best. The motivation and drive to succeed is high and comes from within. Their self-esteem is dependent on being successful so if they know they have a reasonable chance to achieve they will generally persevere at most things they put their hands to. It is in their nature to try their best.

Parents and teachers need to ensure that activities for self-motivated children are structured and delivered in ways that will help these self-motivated souls experience success. A combination of good teaching strategies, parental recognition and plenty of encouragement generally works wonders with these children.

Many children are not so highly self-motivated and need more than good teaching to get them learning, particularly if they don't achieve success initially or some extra hard work is needed. Feelings of success alone are not enough. A range of strategies is needed to motivate them to learn or extend themselves.

### These include:

1. **Establishing short-term goals with children.** "You need to learn this song on the guitar so you can play it in the concert in two week's time."

2. **Making learning enjoyable with fun activities and games.** The interactive nature of computers can hold the interest of many hard-to-motivate students.

3. **Competition.** Many boys just need a little competition to get them working. Getting a higher or even better score can be a prime motivator for some.

4. **Activities of high interest or immediate relevance to children's lives.** Many children are motivated to learn when they know that the activity is real and relevant to their lives.

5. **The use of tangible rewards.** There is a place for offering a small reward as an inducement to get a child to work a little harder BUT rewards need to be given in very small doses otherwise you will need deep pockets.

6. **Parental recognition.** A pat on the head from a mum or dad can be a huge motivator for some children who will really strive for parental approval.

How can you motivate your child to learn? Sometimes it is just one factor but usually it takes a combination of many to motivate children to really try.

Research suggests that purpose and relevance are essential for many kids to learn. The great challenge for many parents and teachers is to keep children interested in learning until its relevance becomes apparent.

## WHAT'S YOUR CHILD LIKE?

### IS YOUR CHILD SELF-MOTIVATED?

#### DOES HE

1. Usually work just hard enough to pass a subject and keep parents and teachers off his back? **Yes [0] No [2]**
2. Usually keep trying when he meets with difficulties rather than give in? **Yes [2] No [0]**
3. Ask questions in class and seek help if he is struggling or having difficulties? **Yes [2] No [0]**
4. Work hard even in boring subjects, regardless of whether he likes the teacher or

not?

**Yes [2] No [0]**

5. Believe that hard work is linked with success? **Yes [2] No [0]**

#### SCORE:

- 10:** A self-motivated student. Probably exerts immense pressure on himself.
- 6-8:** Needs some external motivation but generally motivated by own success. A little reframing may be useful.
- 0-4:** Needs constant prodding. You will need to persist and be patient.



## TRY THIS...

PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE

To help motivate children extend themselves as learners try the following four strategies:

1. Challenge children to set **Personal Bests** in a whole range of activities. "What's the most number of problems you got correct in a test? Can you beat that this week?"
2. Help children see the **link** between learning activities and their areas of interest. For instance, reading non-fiction about their area of interest such as sport can help improve sporting skills.
3. Keep a **variety** of high interest reading materials available at home. Check the materials that children pick up and read. That will provide you with an indication of the areas of interest that motivate them.
4. Get some **game-based** learning materials relevant to children's age and interest levels. Make sure you get guidance from your child's teacher about suitability and interest level.

## ACTION PLAN

First Step . . .

Next Step . . .

For more ideas about promoting resilience in children visit [www.parentingideas.com.au](http://www.parentingideas.com.au)

## QUOTE

"Shoot for the moon. Even if you miss, you'll land among the stars."

LES BROWN