

Staying Motivated

Motivation: the driving force behind human actions. The *why* a person does something. Motivation is the process that initiates, guides, and maintains goal-oriented behaviours.

Types of Motivation

For pupils, understanding the types of motivation can be useful in identifying and pursuing goals.

⇒ Extrinsic Motivation: derives from external sources and involves a contingent reward.

For example, a pupil may be motivated to achieve satisfactory grades in a foreign language course because they receive a tangible reward or compliments for good grades. Their motivation is fuelled by earning external rewards or avoiding punishments. Rewards may even include approval from others, such as parents or teachers.

⇒ Intrinsic Motivation: this is internal to the person.

For example, a pupil may be motivated to achieve satisfactory grades in a foreign language course because they want to work abroad once they leave school. Pupils like this are motivated by their interest, enjoyment, or satisfaction from learning the material.

Not surprisingly, **intrinsic motivation** is congruous with higher performance and predicts student performance and **higher achievement**.

Causes of Low Motivation

There are a few things you should watch for that might hurt or inhibit your child's motivation levels. These include:

All-or-nothing thinking: thinking that they must be absolutely perfect when trying to reach a goal or there is no point in trying, one small slip-up or relapse can zap their motivation to keep pushing forward.

Believing in quick fixes: It's easy to feel unmotivated if you can't reach your goal immediately but reaching goals often takes time.

Thinking that one size fits all: Just because an approach or method worked for their friend does not mean that it will work for them. Help your child to see that if they don't feel motivated to pursue their goals, they should look for other things that will work better for them.

How to Improve Motivation

All people experience fluctuations in their motivation and willpower, and this is certainly the case with school pupils. Sometimes they feel fired up and highly driven to reach their goals. Other times, they might feel listless or unsure of what they want or how to achieve it.

If your child is feeling low on motivation, there are steps you can encourage them to take to increase their drive.

Encourage them to adjust their goals to focus on things that really matter. Focusing on things that are highly important to you will help push you through your challenges more than goals based on things that are low in importance.

Chunk up tasks. If your child is tackling something that feels too big or too overwhelming, encourage them to break it up into smaller, more manageable steps. Then, they focus only on the first step. Only once that is done do we move onto the next.

Build confidence. Research suggests that confidence is strongly linked to motivation. Gaining more confidence in yourself and your skills can impact your ability to achieve your goals.

Remind your child about their past achievements. Using strength cards (a set is available for download here <https://positivepsychology.com/strength-cards/>) help your child to focus on their positive attributes, to keep self-doubt from limiting motivation.

Focus on the basics of self-care. To stay motivated, we need to be well resourced. If resources are low, it's in our survival instinct to hunker down and not expend energy, so motivation will slump. Ensure your child is getting enough sleep, is eating a good diet, engaging in exercise, and having some down time.

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