

☆We're In your Corner☆

This month we dive into **motivation**.

Maybe your child suddenly doesn't seem enthusiastic to learn new things. Maybe a fight occurs whenever it's time to do homework. Maybe you have tried rewards, punishments, threatening consequences...and nothing seems to increase the amount of effort you see your child putting forth. When parents see their child's level of effort decrease, they naturally want to know why this is and how they can help them get motivated. Teachers and parents alike rate motivation as a leading concern when it comes to their student's academic performance—you're not alone!

One way lack of motivation manifests itself is in procrastination...and we've all been there. Procrastination in children can look like avoidance, lack of time-management skills, emotionality, or just not caring. But...what if our kids *aren't* avoiding schoolwork, just to be difficult and leave us feeling defeated? What if they are avoiding it as a way of coping with something that elicits an uncomfortable or anxious feeling?

When kids (*and adults*) procrastinate, it can be an indicator that the task is anxiety-inducing. Keep in mind that the amygdala – the part of the brain that controls emotions like embarrassment, or an emotional upset of any kind – is on the lookout for *anything* that might hurt us. If you feel completely in the dark about what your teacher is explaining in class, your amygdala might call: *Alert! Alert!* Because humans naturally feel insecure or uncomfortable in many new situations, lots of tasks can get interpreted by the brain as DANGEROUS. Putting something off makes us feel better in the moment, and often our present comfort takes precedence over long-term negative impacts that procrastination may create. These safety behaviors can look like lack of motivation.

So let's reframe our outlook: Our kids might appear to lack motivation. However, the reality may be that they need better coping skills for the scary feelings that come up when faced with a new or challenging task. This is an easier and probably more accurate picture than the one that tells us our children don't care.

There's a normal amount of trepidation that comes with learning new things, but when it appears your student is experiencing this reaction more than usual, consider helping them by:

Ideas + Resources

1. **Validating:** We can help our kids identify their feelings in these situations and teach them that their emotions are valid, normal and manageable.
2. **Praising:** Praising your children for their effort, rather than an outcome, can help instill the idea that mistakes and failure are part of learning. This makes tasks attainable as trial and error is viewed as a typical part of learning. Tell them when you see they've made an effort, regardless of the final grade. Pointing out areas where your child used to struggle but has now improved can also help.
3. **Setting Goals+Routines:** Come up with a goal together that they would like to achieve in the near future. Come up with a set of action steps or a routine with easy, specific plans on how to accomplish their goal. Review. Repeat.
4. **Fostering Perseverance** Through modeling and setting expectations at home for an "I try, I try, I try again attitude," a "gonna-get-it-done mindset," a "we're not quitters mentality." Make this a daily mantra or a morning reminder on the way to school. Consider sharing about your own difficult moments that you've overcome. Share these stories at dinner or bedtime.
5. **Ask For Help:** If your child appears to be struggling, let their teacher know you have concerns! Ask to speak to your school counselor about how to help your child gain coping strategies! It takes a village, and we are all here to work together to help your child succeed!

If you continue to have concerns, contact your school counselor to make a plan for a success—they're full of ideas, and are always in your corner!

Below are links to some great videos titles that can help foster perseverance and coping skills at home, all available on YouTube:

Breathing exercises: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6hSkmmNU7PM>

Growth Mindset: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2zrtHt3bBmQ> (ch.1-5)

Perseverance: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IOaFwwLyTRo>

Perseverance Song: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jpqV3dzYOgk>

Don't Give Up Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pWp6kkz-pnQ>

The Power of Yet: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XLeUvZvuvAs>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=46UhAtPyXw4>

Feelings: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w0VQIJVnoxU>

Keep on Trying: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vW_b25YnPmc