

Independent Learning Newsletter Tips

Getting Motivated

For Parents: Motivating Your Child

There is no one approach that will work for every child. Here are some tips to get you started:

1. Encourage Personal Best

While I do believe anyone can do anything if they have the motivation to do so and are able to get the help they need along the way, we need to be realistic. Not every child is naturally academic, not every child will find school easy. Many children have other skills that may not be recognised or given an opportunity in an academic setting. Encourage your child to aim for their own personal best and personal improvement – avoid comparisons with other children or other siblings.

2. Focus On Your Child's Strengths

Help your child build their self-esteem and their belief in themselves as children who have the ability and potential to succeed. Help children re-define what success means. Offer praise for effort and improvement (as opposed to results and ability). Look for opportunities to celebrate these types of successes along the way, no matter how small. It might be mastering a difficult concept, understanding something new, achieving a personal best. The aim is to build children's self-efficacy, their belief in their ability to achieve. Also look for things your child is good at, whether they are academic skills or not, and celebrate these strengths.

3. Help Children Seek Help

Sometimes the reason children are not motivated to work is that there is a sense of fear, they think they will not be able to do the work, so are afraid to try as they think they will fail. If they don't try and fail, then it was because they hadn't tried, not because they couldn't do it. If you suspect this is an issue, look for ways to provide support for your child, are there family or friends that can help when they get stuck, can you encourage your child to ask questions of their teacher before class or at lunch? Does the school offer other support? Only look for a tutor after you have exhausted all other avenues. Your child needs to feel they can succeed and they need to experience success at school. Once children have a taste of success, this can motivate them to continue.

4. Chunk Down The Task

If the work seems overwhelming for your child, help them break it down into small manageable steps so they can stop worrying about the massive task ahead and instead just do one bit, then the next bit, then the next bit. And eventually it will become manageable. Recognise and celebrate the completion of each piece, that's one step closer to the final goal. Your child needs to feel they are having success at what they do, sometimes children just focus on the completion of the task, and don't recognise their successes along the way.

5. Examine How You Treat Failure

One of the biggest enemies of motivation is fear of failure. Children need to see failure as an opportunity to learn from their mistakes, to grow and to improve. Think about how you personally react when you fail at something or it does not go as you planned. Do you model to your child that a setback is an opportunity to gain information to help you for next time?

Think also about how you react when your child fails. Do you help them to learn from this experience and use it as an opportunity to examine ways to improve?

For Students: Getting Motivated

There is no one approach that will work for everyone. Here are some tips to get you started:

1. Focus On The Future

What do you want to do when you finish school? What courses or careers are you interested in? Having a goal in mind can give you the incentive you need to ensure you get the marks that will be necessary. If you don't know what you want to do, then focus on aiming for the best marks you can to give yourself as much choice as possible.

2. Consider The Consequences

Some people are motivated by gaining pleasure while others are motivated by avoiding pain. If you are one of the latter, and are trying to get yourself to do some work, think about all the negative consequences that could occur if you do not do the work. Parents getting angry, getting in trouble at school, teachers not happy, bad marks, failing a subject... sometimes thinking about what could happen if you do not do the work is enough to get you started.

3. Work With Others

Working with friends might be just what you need to get yourself going. But choose wisely, you need to make sure you are working with people who will actually work, not with people who will just talk or muck around.

4. Seek Help

If the reason you are not motivated is that you don't know how to study or how to do the work, then seek help. Find someone who can assist you to make the task more achievable. Friends, family, teachers...there are lots of options.

5. Just Do One Little Bit To Start

Sometimes the hardest part is just starting the work, so try doing just one tiny little step, just one piece. If you have ever had the experience where you stressed and agonised over starting a piece of work, then when you finally started it wasn't nearly as bad as you expected, remind yourself of this. Often we waste more time worrying about not doing the work than the time it would take to do the work!

So learn more this year about how to improve your results and be more efficient and effective with your schoolwork by going to the links section in your portal and opening the ELES handbook:

