

Motivating Your Child During Remote Learning

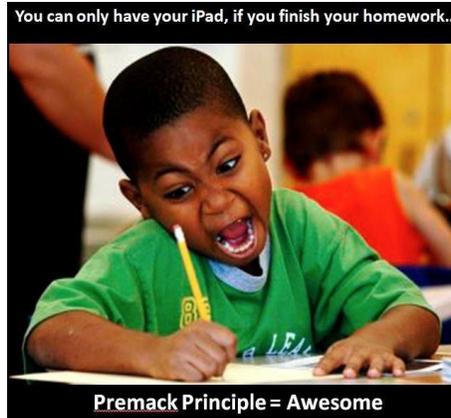
Now that all schools are closed and learning is carried out remotely, your teachers are providing daily work for your children via various routes. So what do you do when your child says “I’m not doing that”, or “I don’t want to do that”, or worse “You’re not my teacher!” Remember, your children are used to school and home being two separate spaces and suddenly these worlds have collided! Teachers are coming into your home through video chats when your kids are used to only seeing them at school, and you, the parent, are becoming an additional teacher when your kids are used to you being the nurturer and provider. So how do you motivate your child in this new role? How do you encourage them to do the work that their teachers are asking of them, and still be the one that snuggles up with them at night for a bedtime story, bakes cookies with them, or takes them for a driving lesson? Here are some tips to help navigate this additional role:

Create a schedule

Creating a daily schedule allows for structure in a child’s day and lets them know what they should be doing and when they should be doing it. It’s important to build in a variety of different activities that encourage movement and breaks as well as completing school-assigned work. Do not feel that if you have to get through an entire’s day’s schedule all at once. This could be daunting and unrealistic for many of us. Maybe introducing a timer can help break work up for your child, as well as work to remind them to take breaks. Home is generally not as scheduled as school and many parents are working from home. So, start small and get through a little bit of a schedule. Reward yourself and your child for that! Build yourselves up for more complete schedules as it works for you.

Grandma’s Law

This ties in nicely with the use of a schedule and is a favorite tool to encourage children to complete tasks. Also known as the Premack Principle, Grandma’s Law uses the “first this, then that” rule, where a less preferred activity is followed by a more preferred activity. When creating a schedule, you can ensure that highly preferred activities follow less preferred activities, and this will motivate your child. For example, if your child isn’t the biggest fan of algebra, schedule a video game break right after an algebra session.... BUT REMEMBER - they must complete the less preferred activity before they get the preferred!



Make Learning Fun

We all know that there are tasks we have to do every day that aren't the most fun and yet we have to do them. Completing those tasks is a lot easier if you make them fun, so as you present work to your child, try to be creative and make it fun!

Be Language Aware

While you are in this tricky-to-navigate dual role, be mindful of the way you engage with your child, particularly when they make an error. There is nothing less motivating than thinking you are getting things wrong, but with some encouragement and a gentle and understanding tone, your child will be motivated to keep on trying with difficult tasks. Try to encourage your child when they appear to be struggling and compliment the process and their persistence, not the product. For example, if your child has difficulty drawing, tell them that you love how they are sticking with it, you like the use of a certain color, or you love the way they included something in their picture. Be wary of criticism, but don't be afraid to make suggestions, like "you did an awesome job with that paragraph, what other things could you add" or "wow, you worked so hard on that picture, can you think of any other colors you could use?". Try not to use the word "but..." as this suggests criticism.

Choose Your Battles

Recognize your child's demeanor and make appropriate modifications. If your child struggled to sleep the night before, allow them to divide a math quiz or assignment in half and do the first half in the morning and the last half later in the day. Working together will make the whole process run more smoothly. If your child won't "work" for you, what will they do for you? Start there. Find success anywhere, reinforce, and then add on.

Reinforcement

Don't be frightened to dangle that carrot! If you know your child is challenged by a particular activity/task, offer some form of additional reinforcement for the successful completion of that activity. Or, don't be shy to reward/reinforce everyday tasks that we have to do. Right now, things are different and challenging for everyone. There's no harm in offering some extra quality downtime if that will motivate your child. Maybe you read TWO stories at bedtime rather than one if they clean their room before dinner, or maybe your older child gets 15 minutes extra chat time with their friends or video time because they finished their reading task.



Communication

Remember to allow and encourage your child to communicate with their teachers! It is important to keep these connections remain active during this time. Encouraging them to ask a question, share a story or a picture, or just touch base may be all the motivation they need to continue doing their work. Their teachers miss them and these connections may take some of the pressure off you!