

NEWSLETTER FOR FEBRUARY, 2017

Dear Parents,

Do you recall your child's first sports day or annual concert? The feeling is indescribable when you watched the little angel take those first steps towards the microphone to showcase his or her talents. The look in your eyes and the smile on your face was the greatest reward you child received that day, which motivated him or her to continue to shine.

Then, as the years pass by and the child grows older, busy schedules and busier lifestyles make it extremely difficult for some of us to be physically present at school functions and other events - The stands get emptier and the participation dwindles. Many an invite lies forgotten at the bottom of a school bag.

"Motivation" is a byword for most of us today. We talk about how our children are unmotivated to do this or that, or feel demotivated or under-motivated. We look around us, and find other children whom we feel are better in a variety of ways, and we hold these children up to our own, measuring them and then highlighting their shortcomings, in the mistaken belief that comparing them unfavourably with their peers will provide the much needed boost to their motivation. If nothing else, such comparisons serve to send out a strong negative message – "My father / mother prefers the other child to me", "I am not good enough for my parent", If you like his/her performance so much, why not adopt him/her instead of putting up with stupid, old me" are just some of the many unspoken thoughts that run through the child's mind when they are compared unfavourably with their peers. Motivation it is not!

The simplest definition of the word is this – "a reason or reasons for acting or behaving in a particular way". Leaving aside the technical meaning and the plethora of research and theories that go with motivation, what we would like to advocate today is a practical approach. As parents, what does it mean to have an under-motivated child? How do we motivate our children to do the best they can?

We have for you some suggestions of the ways in which you can make an effort to send positive messages of trust and support, and to strengthen the bonds of communication between your child and you.

1. **BE THERE** – Easier said than done. However, your actual presence and involvement in the child's activities provide a massive boost to his efforts. Even if you are unable to always be present for an event, talking about it later, asking for details and expressing appreciation of the child's participation in the event, will also provide the necessary encouragement he requires.
2. **READ TOGETHER** -Take turns reading with your child, or establish a family reading time when everyone reads her own book. Demonstrate how important reading is to you by filling your home with printed materials: novels, newspapers, even posters and placemats with words on them.

3. **EXPRESS YOURSELF**- Encourage him to express his opinion, talk about his feelings, and make choices. He can pick out a side dish to go with dinner or she can be asked to name her choices for travel destinations, or select their own extracurricular activities. Ask for input on family decisions, and show that you value what he/she has to say.
4. **BE AN ENTHUSIASTIC PARENT** - Show enthusiasm for your child's interests and encourage her to explore subjects that fascinate her. If he is crazy about horses, offer stories about riding, take him for a movies that involve riding or challenge her to find five facts about horses in the encyclopaedia.
5. **ENCOURAGE LEARNING THROUGH PLAYTIME** - Provide him with play opportunities that support different kinds of learning styles — from listening and visual learning to sorting and sequencing. Toys and games that encourage open-ended play, such as blocks, will develop your child's creative expression and problem-solving skills as he builds. They need lots of unstructured play time as well to encourage their natural curiosity and explorative tendencies.
6. **BE AN EXAMPLE** – it is rightly said that there is no end to learning. In our daily lives, we often need to update ourselves about the latest research and advances in our chosen field of work. So, point out the new things *you* learn with enthusiasm. Discuss the different ways you find new information, whether you're looking for gardening or cooking tips on the Internet or attending an evening or weekend class in a subject of your choice.
7. **BE AN INTERESTED PARENT** - Ask about what he's learning in school, not about his grades or test scores. Let her tell you about the fights she had and the new friends she's made. Then, have her/ him teach you what they learned in school today — putting the lesson into one's own words will help retain what was learned.
8. **LEND A HELPING HAND** - Help your child organize her school papers and assignments so she feels in control of her work. During exams, offer to set question papers or check written answers. If the task seems too daunting, the child will spend more time worrying than learning. Check in with them regularly to make sure they are not feeling overloaded.
9. **CHANGE THE FOCAL POINT** - Focus on strengths, encourage developing talents. Even if she didn't ace her math test, she may have written a good poem in English class or she may be excellent at Art. In addition to a workbook for math practice, give her a writing journal or get her a set of paint brushes.
10. **EVERY DAY IS A LEARNING EXPERIENCE** - Turn everyday events into learning opportunities. Instead of getting annoyed with too many "WHY'S?", encourage him to explore the world around him, asking questions and making connections. Step in with simple explanations when they hit a bump in the road to learning something new.

11. **HELP YOUR CHILD SET GOALS-** These could be short or long term goals, but the key word here is “achievable”. Also, try to focus on the child’s actual ability and needs. Ensure that the goals do not require them to achieve, what – they cannot.
12. **SPEAK THE LANGUAGE OF ENCOURAGEMENT** – No more conversation’s starting with “Just look at so-and-so’s marks!”. Let them compete with themselves. Encourage her to achieve five marks more than what she received on an earlier test. Encourage him to swim two lengths more than the last time. And instead of lectures peppered with “Do this and don’t do that”, let the approach be “What do you think would have been the right way to do this or that?”
13. **AND FINALLY, LETS CELEBRATE - Celebrate achievements, no matter how small.** Completing a book report calls for a special treat; finishing a book allows your child an hour of video games. Be practical, reasonable and consistent. You’ll offer **positive reinforcement** that will inspire him to keep learning and challenging himself.

Please bear in mind that these are not fail-proof methods of motivation, neither are we suggesting that implementation of these methods will bring instant success. Nor can any parent be expected to do all of the things listed below to ensure healthy levels of motivation in any student. Given the constraints of time and resources, busy work schedules and the like, it is a difficult task to ensure that the child will always be motivated and encouraged. However, any effort in the right direction is bound to have a positive effect sooner or later, and your child will definitely benefit from your efforts.

As always, we are available over the telephone at the contact numbers given below, and also through emails. Please mark your email as “KIND ATTENTION - SCHOOL COUNSELLOR” and send it to the email Id mentioned in your child’s school diary. We would love to hear from you, and would welcome suggestions about topics you would like us to write about.

Finally, our prayers and good wishes are specially sent out this month to all the students appearing for the ICSE and ISC Examinations over the next two months. May their hard work and consistent efforts bear good fruit.

With Best Wishes,

The School Counsellors at La Martiniere, Kolkata

For appointments and discussions with the school counsellors, kindly contact the following numbers:

La Martiniere for Girls : 033 4040 6663

La Martiniere for Boys : 033 4040 6612 / 033 4040 6629