

DR. BERTIE'S PARENTING NEWSLETTER

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Each month I invite parents to submit a question or topic that they want to see featured in my free newsletter, and I will pick one of these to address. To ask a question, suggest a topic, or subscribe, write to askdrbertie@gmail.com. For other services, write to drbertiewai@gmail.com.

HOW DO MOTIVATION AND CONFIDENCE GET DEVELOPED?

Motivation, simply put, is the ability to **anticipate future success for a task at hand**. Feeling successful rewards us with positive feelings about ourselves, which provide the impetus for us to initiate and maintain the effort that would carry us through challenges.

Confidence comes from **having experienced a series of successes**. When the child uses her past experience to predict a future outcome, she predicts she will succeed. Such accumulative experience tells the child she is competent.

*****Why do tasks that are developmentally-inappropriate for your child kill motivation?**

Giving a child too many tasks, or tasks that are too difficult for his developmental stage could thwart motivation. Why?

When a child repeatedly faces challenges that feel too difficult for him, the child could get frustrated and develop a sense of incompetence. He might think, "I am asked to do these things. But I find them very difficult. It must be because I am stupid/incompetent/useless." Self-

concepts like these make a child feel bad about himself. To avoid such bad feelings, a child will naturally want to avoid tasks associated with negative feelings. Well-intended parents with unusually high expectations (e.g., "tiger" parents) might inadvertently short-chain their children's future success by putting their children through pre-maturely intensive learning experiences.

Expectations that consistently and unreasonably exceed a child's natural abilities will thwart motivation.

*****Why would providing too much help for your child also thwart motivation?**

The opposite can also thwart motivation. If a child is not given enough developmentally-appropriate challenges to handle on his own—e.g., when appropriate challenges are replaced with over-protective assistance from well-intended parents (e.g., "helicopter" parents)—that child will also develop a sense of incompetence. It is because when caretakers pre-maturely swoop in to

"rescue" the child, a child will think "Mum is always helping me because she thinks I won't succeed. I must be stupid/incompetent/useless."

Not being exposed to enough trials and tribulations, a child has no sense of his own strengths and limits. Since he has not experienced a healthy dose of reality-based struggles and failures, and a chance to learn from mistakes, they never fully develop a sense of mastery of their environment.

*****What increases motivation?**

Start where your child is.

Up-adjust level of difficult step-by-step.

Mentally prepare them for challenges, but reassure them with encouragement.

Reward your child's cooperation, initiative, perseverance, and eventual success with praise.

Combine his budding sense of confidence with his natural interest (e.g. drawing, math, sports), and you are fostering a naturally-driven and highly-motivated child.

For more details, view online version.