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## Equipping Students to Be Successful & Happy

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# 10 Common Parenting Mistakes That Demotivate Your Children

Updated on June 24, 2020 By [Daniel Wong](#) — [17 Comments](#)

Wouldn't it be great if your children were motivated, independent learners?

That way, you wouldn't have to nag or scold them to do their homework, and life would be easier for everyone.

Parents often tell me how frustrated they are that their children aren't interested in school.

They're also concerned that this lack of motivation will carry over to other areas of life.

The problem is that parents often demotivate their children unintentionally.

Here are 10 of the most common mistakes parents make – so do your best to avoid them in your home.

### **Mistake #1: Give your children too many rewards based on achievement or behaviour**

This is a trap that many parents fall into, and for good reason. The first time you try it, it seems to work.

You might tell your children that you'll pay them a dollar each time they get more than 85% for a class test. This seems to work because they start studying harder.

You think to yourself, "Great. Problem solved!"

Then a few weeks later you realise their motivation has waned. They complain that getting a good grade deserves more than one dollar.

An argument breaks out, and you find yourself justifying the price. You even explain that studying hard is their basic responsibility as a student.

If this describes your situation, you're not alone.

Many **studies show that rewards and punishments work in the short term**, but not in the long term.

(Read on to find out what other approaches you can try instead.)

## **Mistake #2: Overemphasise the importance of academics**

Parents think that emphasising the importance of academics will motivate their children to work hard.

The problem is that this approach doesn't turn your children into lifelong learners.

Learning isn't just about getting good grades. It's also about enjoying the process.

When children enjoy learning, they become **motivated to keep on learning**.

Grades can affect your job prospects, but **many great leaders weren't great students**. Unfortunately, many of the students I've worked with tell me that their parents seem to think that grades are the only thing that matters.

We now know that there are many different types of intelligence and that the education system only measures some of these.

All parents would agree that social skills, character development, and learning to relax and reflect are also important areas of focus.

When parents dismiss their children's hobbies and games as a waste of time, they hurt their children's feelings and damage the parent-child relationship.

Parents must value and respect their children's activities. Dance and sport can improve kinaesthetic intelligence, and games and discussions can boost intrapersonal intelligence.

These are vital skills for children to learn and carry with them through life.

### **Mistake #3: Supervise your children too closely**

Micromanaging your children produces similar results to micromanaging employees.

It builds resentment, damages relationships, and robs children of valuable learning experiences.

When children have the opportunity to plan their own work and take responsibility for their actions, they become more **mature and wise**.

They also develop independence and **organisational skills that will benefit them in school** and beyond.

Children who take responsibility for their actions come to understand that they have control over their life. They learn that they have the ability to **create their own success in school and beyond**.

Let your children know you're there for them if they need support. But make it clear that they shouldn't look to you for all the answers.

If they need help, provide strategies they can use to find the answers themselves.

Parents who think of themselves as facilitators rather than supervisors foster self-sufficiency in their children.

### **Mistake #4: Fail to create a family culture of learning**

You've probably noticed that children copy what their parents do, more so than what their parents say.

Children are observational learners, so family culture has a big influence on your children's mindset.

When it comes to your children's learning, one of the most effective things you can do is to create a family culture of learning.

If your children see that you enjoy acquiring new skills and knowledge, they're more likely to enjoy learning too.

Show your children how fun it is to be a lifelong learner, so they'll see the value of education beyond grades.

## **Mistake #5: Allow power struggles to develop**

It's common for power struggles to develop at home.

They often happen over homework or what time the children wake up for school.

If this is happening in your family, take a step back and analyse the situation.

Often, the root of the problem is related to the parent-child relationship.

After all, you know that the more you nag, the less it will help the situation.

The better approach is to focus on rebuilding the relationship and your child's sense of self-worth.

A strong parent-child relationship brings many advantages. In fact, Shawn Achor, author of *The Happiness Advantage*, has found that the **brain functions more optimally** when you're feeling positive.

## **Mistake #6: Set rules without first discussing them with your children**

No one likes to feel powerless or as though they have little control over their lives.

Think about how you'd feel if you were told what to wear, how much TV you could watch, and when you could use your phone.

It's reasonable to have rules at home, but I recommend that you first discuss them with your children.

Workplaces that introduce strict rules without consulting their staff often find that their staff have started to rebel.

You can avoid a mutiny at home by bringing up the matter with your children before laying down the law.

Whenever possible, have a brainstorming session where you share your concerns with your children.

Your children may even propose better guidelines than you could have thought of, so be sure to listen to their opinions.

Taking this approach will mean less frustration for everyone involved.

In addition, your children will be more likely to adhere to the rules in the long run too.

## **Mistake #7: Overemphasise the importance of achievement instead of contribution**

Schools tend to emphasise the importance of academic results. This is a practical aspect of the **education system**, but grades aren't everything.

Good grades aren't even an accurate predictor of success. The best predictor of success isn't good grades or a high IQ, but rather **emotional intelligence**.

Parents must emphasise to their children that life is about much more than grades or accomplishments.

It's about acquiring skills and knowledge so that they can make a difference in the world.

Children can start to develop this mindset by doing something like volunteering to tutor younger students. This type of experience will show them that their knowledge can be used to help others.

As a result, these children will begin to have a greater sense of purpose. They'll begin to look beyond themselves and be less inclined to obsess over their achievements.

## **Mistake #8: Talk as if your children are never putting in enough effort**

Some parents continually tell their children that they should focus better, work harder, apply more **proven study tips**, and spend less time online.

These parents have good intentions, but their actions cause their children to feel as if there's no point in giving their best effort.

The children may even feel as though they'll never be good enough to meet their parents' expectations.

People who believe they're incompetent become incompetent. As Henry Ford said, "Whether you think you can, or you think you can't – you're right."

Telling your children that they're not putting in enough effort reduces their motivation.

What's the alternative?

Try some inspiration and positivity instead.

Remind them of when their efforts paid off and help them to reflect on their behaviour in a non-judgmental way.

It's important to foster a strong sense of self-worth in your children so they know they have the ability to succeed if they try hard.

## **Mistake #9: Fail to acknowledge your children's progress and good behaviour**

Your children care about what you think, whether they show it or not.

When you acknowledge your children's efforts and progress, they'll feel more motivated.

Telling them that you appreciate that they fed the dog without being asked, or that they made their own lunch for school, encourages them to repeat the behaviour.

Even if they didn't quite achieve what they set out to, focus on the progress they made.

Let them know that you see an improvement in their handwriting from all their practice, or that you're proud of them for submitting their homework on time.

Avoid focusing on their abilities and intelligence. Instead, emphasise things related to their attitude and effort. This will lead to more sustained motivation down the road.

## **Mistake #10: Focus on your children's behaviour without getting to the root of the problem**

Parents often focus on their children's bad habits or behaviour without digging deeper.

When children aren't working hard enough or are behaving poorly, there are usually other factors at play.

Children who feel discouraged, overwhelmed, or worthless usually feel that they don't deserve to be treated kindly.

They go out of their way to behave badly because they feel terrible about themselves.

This cycle is like a form of self-harm. It's like the child is saying, "I don't deserve to be loved, so I'll behave badly. That way I'll get what I deserve."

Focusing on the behaviour doesn't help; the underlying issue must be addressed.

Show your children that you're always ready to listen. When they eventually share their struggles, you'll be able to get to the heart of the issue and solve the problem.

## **Conclusion**

We parent our children while we're rushing out the door in the morning, or trying to get everyone fed.

As such, it's easy to make the sorts of mistakes that demotivate our children.

Instead of feeling guilty, take action. Review the list of mistakes in this article once more, and identify the ones you've been making.

Take a few minutes to create an action plan.

How can you start [motivating your children](#)?

What steps can you take to [inspire them to be their best](#)?

How can you demonstrate the behaviours that you want to see in your children?

As you implement your plan, you'll see improvements in your parent-child relationship and in your children's behaviour too.

It'll take work on your part, but it'll be worth it!

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Banu Gunawardana says

[August 30, 2019 at 5:37 pm](#)

As a student i agree with it but, unfortunately my parents lack intrest with this topic.  
Anyways motivative article.

[Reply](#)

Jayant says

[June 13, 2020 at 12:24 pm](#)

Yes they will not understand



## Reply

Suryakumar says

August 31, 2020 at 10:39 am

Yes they never understand I even tried to speak to them but they are just not listening and always nagging me a day never goes by without scolding me and after all the drama they say this one thing "It's for your own good" just a waste of time

Reply

Wizpad says

November 24, 2020 at 11:29 pm

100000000% correct

Reply

Anonymous says

December 1, 2020 at 11:17 am

Yes...I don't think I ever heard of them truly mentioning that I have put in the effort...all they think is that I've been only caring about my small business and using Instagram too much and that's the reason why I did not do well. I mean I know they meant the best of me but it makes me hurt and tired. They have never seen me in my room studying for 4-5hrs etc and going to tuition on my own. All they think for my bad grades is social media and a small business and not because I just don't understand the subjects and topics.

Reply

Dong says

December 11, 2020 at 1:39 pm

Yes my mom isn't happy with me even when my math has improved a lot.

[Reply](#)

jeevya says

January 3, 2021 at 10:28 pm

true

[Reply](#)

Ayush Kumar says

September 5, 2020 at 10:30 am

Even when I get 85% they will still scold me because 2 years before I repeated the class. But now in every exam I score more than 80%. Anyway, at least thank you for listening to me because my parents don't!

[Reply](#)

Emmie says

September 10, 2020 at 8:42 am

I'm so tired of trying and improving with no acknowledgement. It's always "you need to do better" even when I'm so depressed I don't want to move I try to make progress with school. But my mom doesn't seem to care. And because I'm not close to her I don't feel safe telling her things. I just needed to get that out of my system.

Reply

Anonymous says

October 17, 2020 at 10:23 pm

Whatever i do they have a problem with everything...the way i sit, talk,walk, what i wear, who i talk to everything. They think they've given me birth so they cn do anything they want with me. I am not even allowed to choose my own career. They feel I'm not good enough n i dont work hard enough to achieve "their" dreams n crack neet. They are so strict that I'm not allowed to talk to any male frnds n i am scolded for using a heart emoji in WhatsApp status. Anywys...i was just feeling down so wrote it here. Bye

Reply

Amna says

January 28, 2021 at 9:19 pm

I hope you're feeling better.. You go girl!!

Reply

Silvery says

October 23, 2020 at 9:38 pm

Honestly, my parents never cared about how I felt. Every time they just scold me and berate me, I'd just feel terrible to the point I don't feel like doing anything. I really hope my parents get to see this article, but knowing them, they'd rather treat their child like garbage.

Reply

senuja vehan perera says

December 18, 2020 at 5:07 pm

My mother scolds me when I get low marks. She doesn't cheer me up for the next exam. She says that I will get the same low marks over and over again. Is it right to do so?

Reply

Jeevya says

January 3, 2021 at 10:30 pm

No it isn't. I barely remember them cherishing my new commitments and good marks.

Reply

wonsik jung says

January 1, 2021 at 10:27 am

My mum just gave up on me when it came to studying... and she is just saying that 'I am waiting'

Reply

Nadira says

January 28, 2021 at 9:28 pm

My dad always underestimates me in my studies. He thinks that I am lazy and says that my marks are always low and never high. He says that I might not get accepted into universities and scolded me very badly today for not attending some classes online. He also warned me and said that he might give up on me. I just don't feel motivated. Am I the bad guy or is he?

Reply

DJ says

January 29, 2021 at 4:18 am

I had a assignment and my parents went no xbox on weekdays. I can only play on Friday nights and weekends (and the assignment took me 1 min to do lol)

Reply

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