

# **Motivating Your Child Is As Easy As P.I.E.**

By

Debbie Elder

## **Three Easy Steps to Motivating Your Children to Reach their Potential!**

**“Every child wants to succeed, and  
Every child wants to please you – the parent!  
Our job is to make it easy for them!”**

**...Debbie Elder**

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Like baking a pie, motivating your children requires preparation: “P” for planning, “I” for involvement and “E” for enthusiastic encouragement.

In order to prepare for this task, you need to know what it is you are trying to accomplish. There are two basic principles we need to keep in mind when discussing motivating our children. First, every child wants to succeed, and secondly every child wants to please you – the parent! Our job is to make it easy for them! In order to provide the guidance our kids require we need to do our homework. Take a minute and ponder these two questions.

**What do you want walking out your door at 18?  
What is your plan to achieve this goal?**

Answering these questions is necessary because once the big decisions are made, the little ones are easy – does it get me closer to my goal or not? If the answer is no, you know how to respond. So many of us are unsure of what we want, we only know what we don’t want!

Raising the leaders of tomorrow is a worthwhile task and one I know we are all interested in achieving. Don’t we want citizens who are well rounded, a child who is empathetic, appreciative and therefore happy? We know that when you appreciate what you have, joy is the result. Don’t we want children who are thinkers? Children who can formulate opinions, analyze what others say, and then determine their *own* thoughts on an issue?

Remember the mind is like a parachute – it works best when it is open!

Don’t we want self confident children? Keeping in mind that self esteem comes from what you do, not from what others say about you and your actions. Don’t we want self-disciplined children, kids who reflect a strong sense of self and who have incorporated positive self talk? Lastly, don’t we want successful children? Leaders who understand that 100% effort and doing what others don’t want to do will always set you above the crowd.

So how do we get there?

## **“P” is for Planning**

### **Goal Setting**

Planning for success increases our ability to gain success. Goal setting is an important first step. Work with your children and set S.M.A.R.T. goals, goals that are specific, measurable, action orientated, relevant/realistic, and time specific. I have my children write their ten goals out daily in their ‘goal book’. This allows what they’re concentrating on to be the underlining focus.

Harvard University did a study where they measured the success of their students. What they found was that the 3% who wrote their goals down had become more successful than the other 97% combined.

### **Plan your work time together.**

Allow your child to have input in the process. For example, you may decide mutually to start your school day at 9 am. When you make decisions with your children instead of *for* your children, you enlist their cooperation. They have been part of the process and as a result they too own the outcome. This planning tool and technique is not limited by anything other than your imagination. Don’t restrict their participation to only school events.

When my children were between 8 and 9 years old, I worked with them on setting up their own car pools. Why? Well, I already had this skill, and they needed to learn it! We scripted what they needed to say, practiced and then executed! Was it easy? No, not at first, but now they have learned this skill which is another step towards independence – one of my goals for them. Perhaps your children can help with planning field trips, vacations or even planning menus – why should you have to figure out what everybody in the family wants to eat?

## **“I” is for Involvement**

### **Involve them by respecting their ideas, opinions, and time.**

So often as parents, we forget how much our children have to offer. Let me give you an example; my husband needed help with a name for a new product. We went through our brainstorming process (which I had taught the kids previously) and came up with a list of 15 possible names. One of our suggestions became the choice for naming this new system! Success for the kids and success for the company – everybody wins! In addition, keep in mind that unlike obedience, respect is earned.

## **Allow them to manage their own time.**

With regards to time, if your goal is to have children who have good time management skills, stop managing their time for them. Stop micro managing! Give them the task and the deadline, for example, “Sometime before dinner I need your laundry put away.” This is a respectful request and one that does not require them to stop what they are doing because *you* have decided ‘it’ needs to be done now!

Problem solving and decision-making skills also allow us to involve our children. Don’t wait until it is too late to teach these important life skills. By offering choices, looking at problems as learning opportunities and providing instructions at every “teachable” moment, we will ensure our children’s ability to be decisive. Remember that there are no problems, only solutions!

## **Use statements that are enforceable.**

In addition to teaching these valuable techniques, I encourage you to remember to use statements that are enforceable. Keep in mind, you can not change anyone’s behavior but your own, and to try generally leads to power struggles where everyone loses. Talk in terms of what *you* are going to do. For example,

“I am leaving for the store at 2:30 p.m.; those who are in my car are welcome to come.”

“Breakfast will be served until 7:30 am. Get all that you need to hold you until lunch.”

“I’ll listen to you as soon as your voice is as calm as mine.”

“I give treats to children who brush their teeth regularly.”

“Toys you pick up, you can keep. Toys I pick up will be taken away.”

In other words, use “I” statements, the when ..... then ..... technique, and above all else remember who owns the problem. When you get upset and lose your temper, it is very easy for the child to blame you instead of taking responsibility for themselves. A child who cannot own their own behavior is very difficult to motivate.

## **“E” is for Enthusiastic Encouragement!**

### **Success breeds success.**

Present your ideas in a way that makes it easy for them to say yes. Success breeds success, so catch them being successful. Too often we comment on what is not done to our standard, as opposed to what is done correctly. Acknowledge what you see instead of judging them and their actions. When you notice something done properly, let them know immediately.

## Keep a victory journal.

Keep a victory journal and record all their successes. Try the Chip system. Write down all the things you want your children to do or how you want them to behave in order to earn chips. Next list what a child could lose chips for and lastly, list what can be 'purchased' with their earnings. Remember to reward all behavior you want repeated. For example, my children earned a chip for waking up and 'starting' school, cleaning up after themselves, putting their dishes in the dishwasher, finishing work by a certain time, etc. A child might lose chips for being disrespectful, not completing their work on time or not doing their chores without prompting. Rewards should have meaning for your child and they should be involved in the preparation of the list. Listen to what they say motivates them.

## Talk about them in a positive way.

Let your children overhear you talking about them in a positive way. This is true validation. Be specific in your comments. "I like the way you wrote that sentence so neatly and spelled each word correctly" - instead of good job. By being specific and giving them a very clear description of what behavior you want repeated, you equip them with the necessary tools for success. Encouraging phrases such as

"I like the way you handled that."

"I know you can do it."

"You are working hard."

"You are improving."

"I appreciate what you did."

allow you to focus on your child's assets and strengths to build their self-confidence and feelings of worth.

Motivating your children should not be any more difficult than teaching them. Each requires planning, involvement, and encouragement. By focusing on what you want - not what you don't want, you are able to help them give you the results you need. Each decision you make must be aligned with your vision. Take the time to outline specific details that illustrate clearly the adult you want your child to become. Describe his values, work ethic, goals, desires, people skills and success strategies. With this clear picture, an action plan, the involvement of your children and a truly enthusiastic approach you can do it. In the words of Napoleon Hill, "If you can conceive it, you can achieve it!"

*Debbie Elder is the Executive Director of Gateway Preparatory School, a long distance learning program for homeschoolers grades 6-9. Gateway is a **real school**, not an "Umbrella." We are recognized by the College Board, listed on the National Roster of Secondary Schools by the Education Testing Service. Gateway has a flexible year round program with a streamlined curriculum and integrates the accelerated learning skills found in the Gateway Advantage. We feature Block Schedules, College Internet Format, College Prep Modules, SAT/ACT Prep, and College Counseling.*

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