



Can You Motivate Your Child?

To understand the mysteries of motivation requires us to let go of an old approach that is a common misperception. What motivates a mouse to run through a maze? Most people think it's the cheese. The more accurate truth is HUNGER! If the mouse is not hungry, it will not run the maze. Therefore, neither a nicer *carrot* nor a bigger *stick* will motivate your child – only a “hunger” from within will generate the action that makes him look motivated. When we manipulate our kids to perform, that's not personal motivation.

Since motivation is the pursuit of an unmet need, a parent's goal is to discover the need and provide opportunities for experiencing whatever satisfies the need. Begin this process by finding out why your son/daughter plays the sport they're in. Have them finish

this sentence: “My top 3 reasons for playing this sport are...” Ask for very specific answers. “What makes it fun?” Which part is most fun?” “What attention do you enjoy?” “Which kind of recognition pleases you most?” When you understand an athlete's “WHY” you are closer to understanding his or her personal motivation.

Everyone is motivated about something, because we all have unmet needs. Perhaps your child thrives when one or two of these items can be experienced:

- Achievement or excellence
- Feeling important or significant
- Recognition or attention
- Learning new skills
- Belonging or membership
- Competing

Motivation comes from within. However *inspiration*, which is a heightened level of emotional energy, can come from the outside. Parents can play an important role in providing inspiration. Here are three things you can do to provide that inspiration:

1. Paint a picture of what you believe could be accomplished IF there is a “want to” within your athlete.
2. Share inspiring stories of what others have accomplished but do it without implying...”So you *should* do the same.”
3. Reinforce a positive belief in your athlete's ability to achieve whatever is on their “want to” list, without imposing your timetable.





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Discussion Guide for Parent and Athlete

1

Ask your athlete to name the top three reasons he or she plays sports. Wait for specific reasons per sport.

2

Discuss the concept of self-motivation to clarify the fact that we must find our own motives for working hard at something.