

## Motivating Children or...how not to be a pushy parent

Archive - Childalert News

In this increasingly pressurised world where tests and exam results for even little ones seem to hold children's future in the balance, it's easy to feel as pressured and anxious as our offspring" says Elizabeth Hartley-Brewer, author of *Motivating Your Child*. "We try our best to support and encourage them and 'do the right thing', but sometimes without realising it we slip into controlling and pushing. If we do, our efforts can backfire" she adds.

When we help with homework it can so easily end in tears. And while rewards and incentives work well for some, for others they cause more arguments than they solve. We know children want us to be interested in what they do, but how can we do that without being viewed as 'nosey'?

"The secret" says Elizabeth "is to be aware when that vital support and encouragement shades into taking over, for this will undermine any child's self-belief and their ability to be self-motivated - the ultimate goal." She suggests putting children in charge of as much of their school learning and out-of-school activities as is possible and suitable for their age.

Here are some of Elizabeth's suggestions to help you walk the fine line between being pushy and being a pushover.

### **Focus on support and encouragement:**

- Show enthusiasm: have fun celebrating achievements!
- Be positive: notice effort and see any carelessness as a slip of the moment, not a sign of future failure.
- Accept and understand: listen to their difficulties and accept these as real for them.
- Boost their self-belief: when they have a task to do, say something encouraging and leave them to get on with it. Hovering close by suggests you think they'll need your help.
- Be interested, but ask open-ended rather than specific questions.

### **Increase your child's sense of control:**

- Wherever possible, allow children to work to their goals, rewards and time scale, not yours.
- Don't jump in too quickly: give them time to spot their own mistakes.
- Help by offering a range of possible solutions, rather than telling them what's right or what to do. Accept that they will have different ways of seeing and doing things.
- Offer some choices about when they do things and where they prefer to work.
- If they run out of time to complete something, avoid finishing it for them.

*Elizabeth Hartley-Brewer is the author of *Motivating Your Child, Positive Parenting, Self-Esteem for Girls, Self Esteem for Boys, Cooperative Kids and School Matters.**

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