POSITIVE PARENTING MANUAL

3

NEGLECTING SCHOOLWORK



Disciplining children without the use of corporal punishment

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NEGLECTING SCHOOLWORK

© UNICEF, April 2023

ISBN : 978-92-806-5108 -9

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In this manual, the term “mother/father/parent” is used for convenience. It applies to all those with a caring role, including grandparents and extended family members, foster carers, etc.

Acknowledgements

This publication is adapted from the original work of Ms. H.P.C Wasantha Pathirana MSSc. (University of Kelaniya) M.A. (University of Kelaniya) B.A. (Special) University of Colombo, and we thank her for her contribution.

Positive Parenting manual booklets

1. Talking Back
2. Fighting with Siblings
3. Neglecting Schoolwork
4. Household Chores and Responsibilities
5. Returning Home Late
6. Setting Limits on the Use of Digital Devices
7. Fussy Eaters
8. Throwing Tantrums
9. Relationships
10. Staying Awake Past Bedtime
11. Substance Abuse
12. Gender

The icons in this book depicts the following to its readers

 Think a Minute

 Point To Remember

 Important Lesson

 Practical Advice

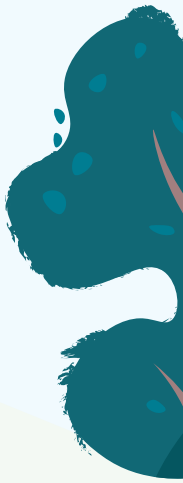
 Question

 Write Your Thoughts

INTRODUCTION TO POSITIVE PARENTING

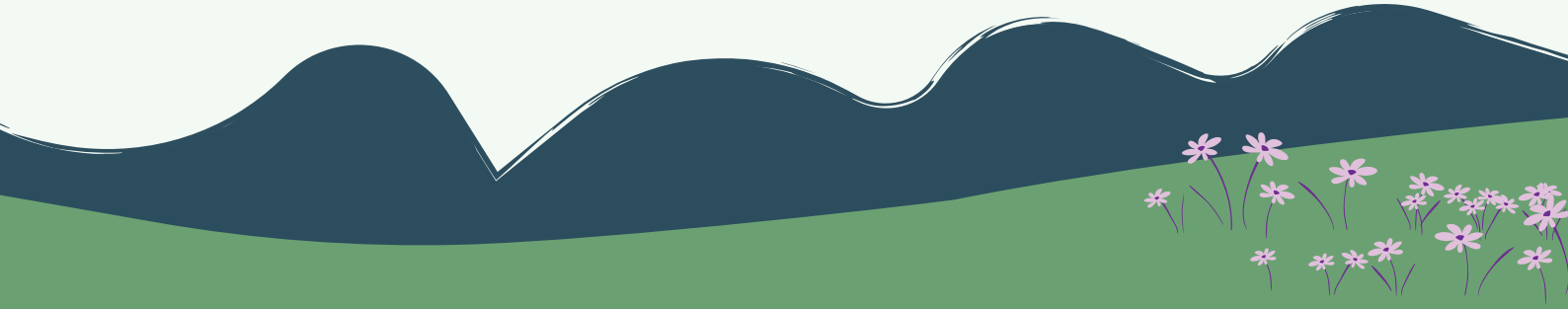
What is Positive Parenting?

Positive Parenting is not restricted to a method, a set of rules, or a style; it is a belief, a way of living. Children should be treated with respect, free from fear of violence and shame, and guided with loving encouragement. The very first step to become a positive parent is to adjust one's thinking, by improving your own knowledge, attitudes, behaviours and skills. To achieve this, parents must be willing to reflect on themselves and their role as parents, do their best to complete all the activities; and use the new information in their daily interactions with their children. Parents will learn that communication is a crucial way to ensure an ongoing relationship with their children.



Positive Parenting Manual

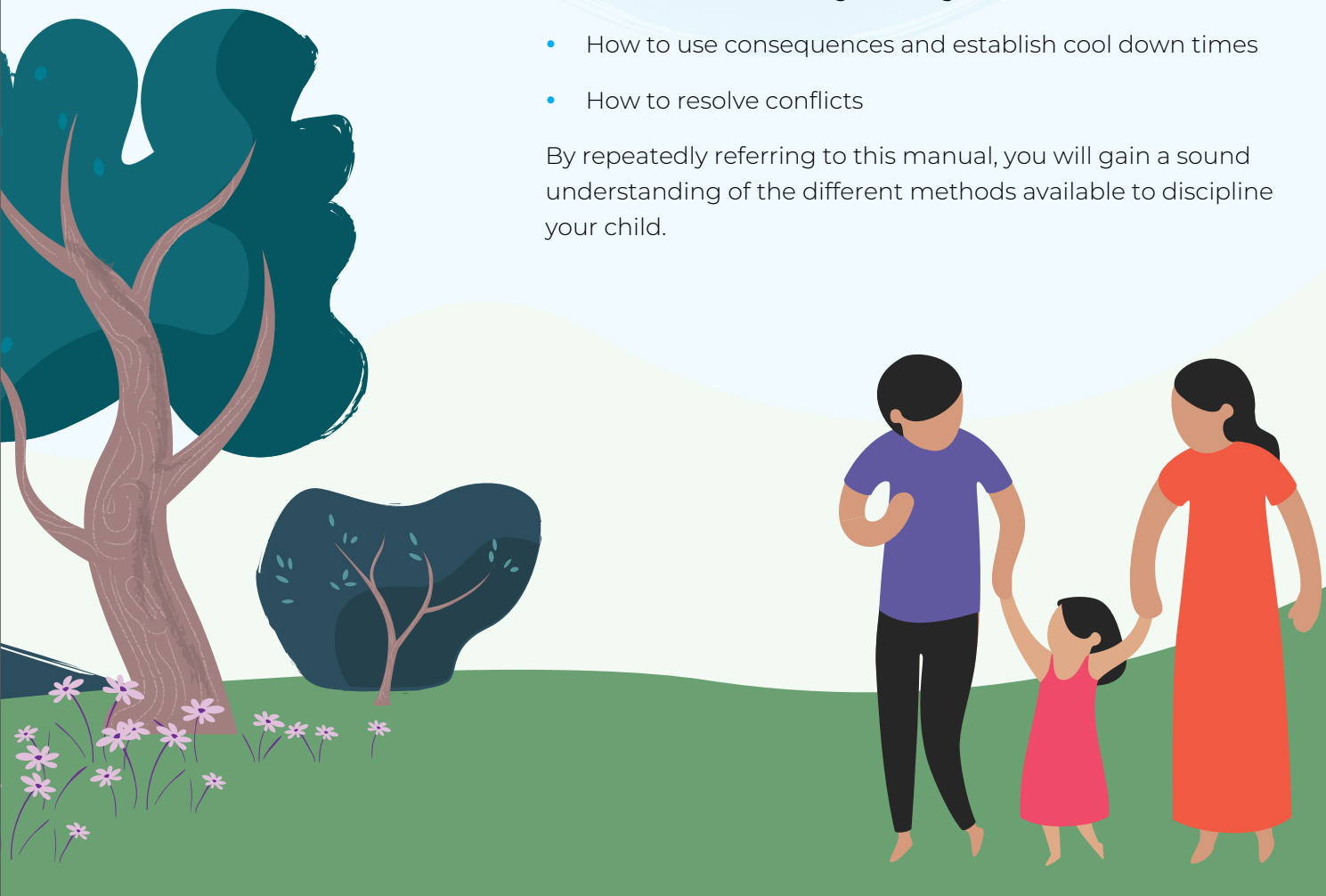
This manual allows us to begin thinking about how we can bring up a child without inflicting/causing physical harm. This method is known as positive parenting.



This manual focuses on specific tools such as:

- How to establish goals for you and your child
- How to spend quality time with your children
- How to express yourself and enable your child to express their feelings in a safe environment
- How to use praise and reward
- How to give instructions and establish household rules
- How to redirect and ignore negative behaviours
- How to use consequences and establish cool down times
- How to resolve conflicts

By repeatedly referring to this manual, you will gain a sound understanding of the different methods available to discipline your child.



What positive parenting is:

- Positive parenting is about long-term solutions that develop children's self-discipline.
- Positive parenting is clear communication of expectations, rules and limits.
- Positive parenting is about building a mutually respectful relationship with your children.
- Positive parenting is about teaching children life-long skills.
- Positive parenting is about increasing children's competence and confidence to handle challenging situations.
- Positive parenting is about teaching courtesy, non-violence, empathy, self-respect, human rights and respect for others.

What positive parenting is not:

- Positive parenting is not permissive parenting.
- Positive parenting is not letting children do whatever they want.
- Positive parenting is not about having no rules, limits or expectations.
- Positive parenting is not about short-term reactions or alternative punishments to slapping and hitting.



A common complaint among parents is that their children are not obedient.

"This child is very disobedient. S/he never listens to anything we say." "S/he always does what we ask her/him not to do. Not in the least bit obedient." Are statements like these made in your family? Do you feel that your children are disobedient?

In your opinion, what characteristics are typical of a child who is obedient? A child who is inclined to be disobedient?

List them separately.

Disobedient	Obedient

Compare your column on obedience with that of another parent's column on obedience. Have a discussion on this. You most probably will see both similarities and differences between the two lists.

Reflect on your own parenting style and consider how you contribute to this behavior.



The differences highlight that what we consider as obedience/disobedience is a relative factor. This just means that the way you think of it is different to the way someone else thinks about it.

Once you have a clear understanding of the key behaviours you want to see or change, try out the strategies below to address these behaviours and support your child to think and act independently.



1. Make a list of what is considered good and bad behaviour at home, the boundaries of these behaviours as well as the consequences of not adhering to the boundaries. Depending on the age of your child/ children, do this together with them. Display this list at home in a place where everyone can see.
2. Appreciate and praise the child every time s/he displays good behaviour. The love you show towards your child must be unconditional and positive.
3. Also note, we should disapprove and dislike the wrongful behaviour of the child, not the child himself.

At times, parenting can be difficult! So, it is important to keep in mind that these positive parenting techniques take time and patience to be successful. It cannot be achieved in one day. If they don't work today, remember to try again tomorrow. It is important to be consistent in your parenting approach and being consistent is the only way your child may be able to understand what you are trying to communicate.

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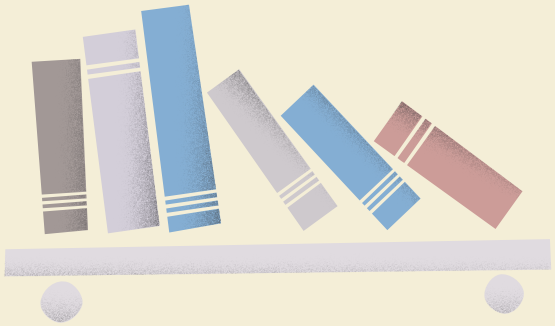
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NEGLECTING SCHOOLWORK



In Sri Lanka, there is a common understanding that 'learning is a treasure which even a thief cannot steal.' However, today education has become a competition in our country. Many parents enter their children into this race and run alongside them.

Even though these efforts may make children and parents weary, thoughts of successful results in forthcoming exams and other competitions, keep their dreams of a better future alive.

A short story

Chandima's mother hears her scream and comes running, "Why are you shouting child? Why is the little one crying....." she asked turning towards Chandima's son Ruwanga. Ruwanga who is nine years old clung to his grandmother's wrap-around and sobs,

"Athamma (Grandmother), Amma (Mother) hit me....."

At that moment, Chandima pulled Ruwanga towards her and responded to her mother with, "Amma you keep out of this. He is thoroughly spoilt. He barely does any schoolwork. Plays the whole day. The books are all blank. I am the one who got scolded by his teacher and she said he won't be able to sit for the scholarship exam at this rate. I was so embarrassed; all the other mothers were staring at me. From today onwards playtime is cancelled. Starting now, you are going to finish up all the incomplete schoolwork.....".

Chandima then dragged Ruwanga and made him sit on the chair at the study table.

"Amma now go, I will look after him" she said and chased her mother out and shut the room door. Athamma was at a loss at what to say or do.

Every now and then, Athamma hears Chandima scolding or speaking sternly to Ruwanga and at times even the sound of hitting.

"What have you written? Did you not understand anything I taught you all this time?"

"You've done the same mistake again! Don't you have a brain?" Chandima yells at Ruwanga and knocks his head with her knuckles.

"Ruwanga, I am not going to say it again! Did I ask you to stare at my face?" Ruwanga continues to stare at Chandima's face as though he had no clue what she was talking about.

"Don't put the pencil in your mouth! Look at how I've solved the sum and copy it onto your book...." Chandima was growing weary at this point.

"Dear Lord why can't this idiot understand after teaching him for so long?" Chandima questions herself out of pure frustration.

Chandima felt a great deal of worry and uncertainty as she thought of Ruwanga's future.



When your child starts school, you probably will have two wishes – that they will be happy and enjoy school and that they will do well in their studies! Getting off to a good start at pre-school or primary school will help to ensure they are able to make the most of their school years.

Try to get into good habits from the start.

Plenty of sleep is important, as children cannot concentrate if they are tired. Get into a routine, getting up and having a good breakfast, with plenty of time to get ready so you don't have to worry about being late.

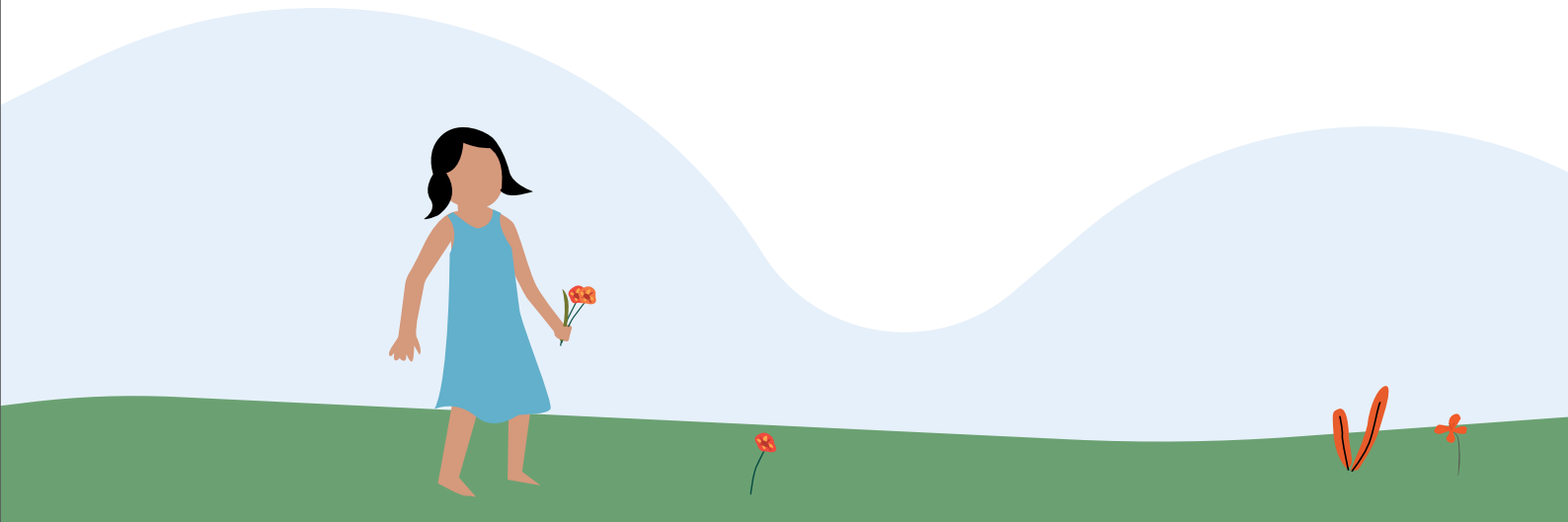
When your child starts school, they will be starting to learn to read and write. Young children soak up language, so help them by talking to them and reading them bedtime story. Ask questions about the day at school and what they learned.

Your child will also be learning more about numbers, so you can help by making up number games. Perhaps when you're out together you can look at all the numbers around you. If you're at home, you can count toys, play with the kitchen items, or go into the garden and count flowers and stones.

Remember that your pre-school and primary aged child still needs to learn through play. Starting school shouldn't mean she/he is under pressure to achieve. She/he needs to enjoy herself/himself and be encouraged to progress at his/her own pace.

As you child moves up through the Grades, you will notice that each child's skill and ability to study differs. One child may be more proficient in languages, science and mathematics, while another is gifted in sports or creative areas such as drawing and handwork.

However, many parents push their children to score high grades across all subjects with the ultimate dream that their daughter or son will become a doctor or an engineer, irrespective of their unique skills, abilities and interests.

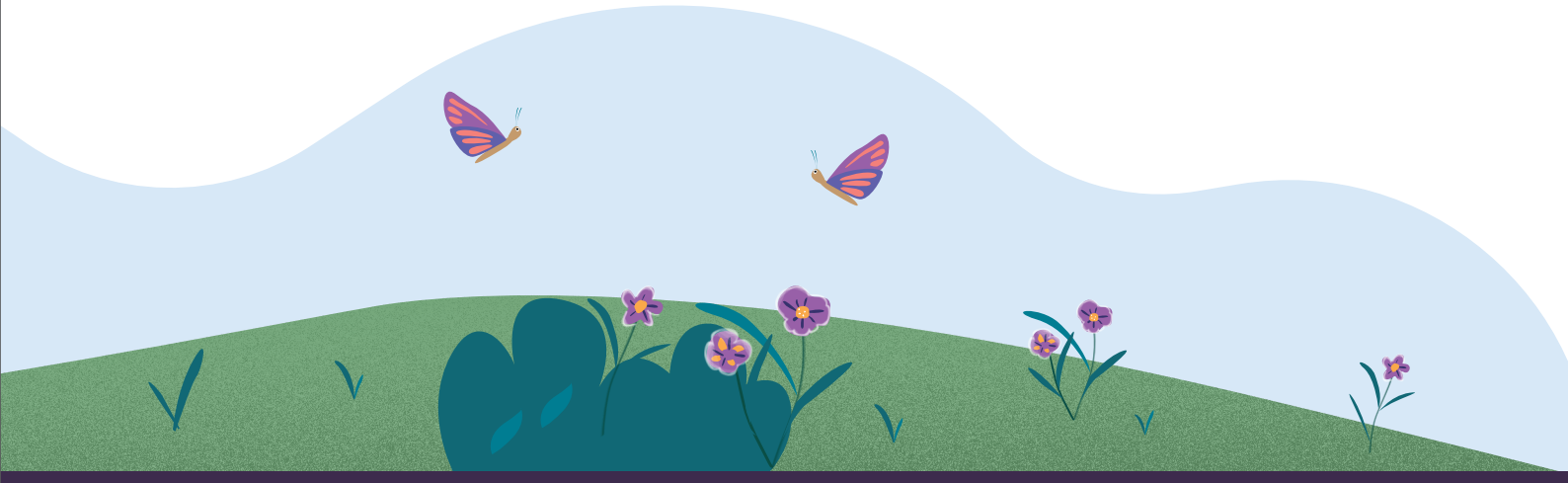


Having considered these facts, see if you can understand Chandima's son, Ruwanga's situation better. In order to do that let's draw our attention to the questions below.

Was the method used by Chandima to teach Ruwanga successful?

Despite Chandima explaining multiple times, why was Ruwanga unable to grasp things?

Think about the experiences you had as a child, where learning brought you happiness. Write them in the box below.



If you did not have any such happy or memorable experiences, think about why this was so.



Likewise, in your experience if your education was happy and enjoyable, how do you think that shaped you into the adult you are today? Write your thoughts below.



If your childhood experience of education was unpleasant and not enjoyable, how has that shaped you as an adult today? Write your thoughts below.



Should you force your child to study?

Constantly nagging your child to study and forcing your child will not produce positive results.

If you try to force your child to study the way Chandima did, by dragging her son into a room, closing the door and forcing him to study, your child will find studying a chore and a nuisance. It could also lead to him refusing to attend school. It will be difficult to explain the importance and value of education to your child by pressuring him to learn in this manner.

Therefore, helping the child to learn willingly, with no pressure or fear and with joy is what is most beneficial for them.

> ...helping the child to learn willingly, with no pressure or fear and with joy is what is most beneficial for them.

What can we do to help a child learn willingly and with joy?

> "You have schoolwork right? Bring your books and do your work - you are not to get up from this seat until you finish your work"

Instead of saying that,

> "Now it's study time. Let's see what we have to do today....."

> "What new thing do we have to learn today?"

would be a better suited statement to use with your child. Such statements have the ability to make a child come running, willingly in anticipation of learning something.

A child's first teacher is their parent. Often, a mother or father is the first person to teach a child through talking, singing and playing.

"Duwa/Putha, do you have any homework today?" - is a simple question you could ask your child to remind them of their school related responsibilities. This could go a long way in encouraging your children to prioritize their education.

Sometimes your child may say:

"Yes, Amma. I have a lot of homework to do but I am too tired to do it now." Then you can respond with,

"Rest for a short while. Let me know which subjects you have homework for, I can take those books and keep them on the table for you."

By saying something like this and helping your child out in this manner, you can help them feel supported and reduce the chances of them neglecting their homework.



Some children are naturally more organized than others. Help your child to get organized by having a desk or space for them to keep their books and school things. Help them to keep a diary or homework book so they can write down in one place the homework that is given and make sure they bring home the right books from school.

If they make a mistake and forget one day, try again the next. The most important thing is to help them do the best they can, without anger or pressure.

Some children may struggle to do their school work due to the following reasons:

- **As the skill level of each child differs, the child may not be able to understand the homework that was assigned to them.**

  When a child struggles with an exercise or task, it can be very stressful. Children can give various reasons and make a range of excuses to leave the task. If your child is finding one area of work hard. Communicate with the teacher or find an older student who can help them to understand what is required.

- **The child feels tired**

  "I am feeling tired. I don't want to study/do the homework"

  If your child says something along these lines, there are a few important facts to consider and draw your attention to, in such instances.

  Sometimes certain **illnesses** can cause your child to feel tired. E.g. : An illness due to malnutrition, anemia or nutritional deficiency

  If you suspect that your child may be ailing from one of these, seek the help of a medical professional immediately and get them treated.

How much time should your child spend on their Studies?

If the child has a lot of homework to complete, which will take some time, give her/him a break in between assignments: in doing so, consider her/his age, mental state and needs.



- It is not easy to keep small children in one place for studies. They are typically unable to stay in one place for a long period of time. They do not have the ability to concentrate on one thing for long. It is best to allow 20 minutes of study time followed by a short break. During the break allow them to run and jump around.
- Regular sleep and good nutrition can help young children concentrate on studies better
- Older children can concentrate for longer hours than younger children. It is estimated that older children can concentrate for a maximum of 45 minutes but this too may vary depending on the child's capabilities. When a child studies for about 45- 60 minutes give her/him a break for the same amount of time or half that time.

These techniques and steps will help you to engage your child in learning and school educational activities, without having to resort to physical punishment or psychological aggression.

If you feel that the above methods have not been successful with your child, read and understand the following.

- Get together with other parents and ask about their experiences of supporting their children in school
- Get to know your child's friends

  As children grow up, friends become an important part of their lives. A child's learning may be influenced by the way her/his friends approach learning.

  Associating with and having a good relationship with your child's friends and their parents will make it possible to get assistance from them to help your child.
- Under no circumstances should you use physical punishment because a child refuses to study. Violence hampers a child's brain development.

A Short Story



Sudeera only secured 45% for math at the term exam. He is due to do GCE O-Level exam next year. Amma thinks that if nothing is done now, he will not do well at the exam.

As Amma was speaking to Sudeera, she got to know that Sudeera's best friend Thilina had obtained 90% for math.

One day when Amma went to school she met Thilina. Amma asked if he could assist Sudeera with his Maths. Thilina was more than willing to help his friend. Amma met Thilina's mother as well, "can I send my son over to your house on Sunday evening to get some help in Math?" she asked.

Thilina's mother too was overjoyed. She also said that Thilina improved in Maths after starting classes under a certain tutor. So with Thilina's mother's help, she got Sudeera enrolled in the tuition class.

As Sudeera's mother was able to ensure that Sudeera received help from his friends and acted wisely, Sudeera was able to obtain a grade of 75% for Math the following term.

TIPS to help your child do their best at school

- **Before your child starts schooling,** you can do the following in order to create an environment that is suitable for learning and help her/him realise that learning brings joy.

  - From a small age, help them experience learning through touch and feel, using their fingers.

    When children are young, everything is a new experience for them. Therefore, they learn by touching, eating, smelling, listening to, and seeing things. Ensure they are given the freedom to do so.

    Sometimes, certain things they want to do can be dangerous. You need to make sure you are always near your child during these times and enable them to experience those without causing themselves any harm.

  - Put up posters of different colours, letters, pictures, shapes, numbers etc. so that the child will be inquisitive and ask questions as to what they are. You can then use that opportunity to explain these different things to the child.

  - Teaching practices in Sri Lanka often demand children to learn complex writing methods even before they start formal school, however this method takes away children's natural curiosity about letters and their way of writing. Do not force your child to learn complex writing at a young age, focus on letters, the sounds they make and the different shapes and forms that make them.

- **Explain to your child why it's good to be able to sit quietly and listen to instructions.**

  Tell him/her that you know they will be a good learner if she/he gives herself the chance.

  You could also help her/him to practice behaving in quiet places by taking her/him to a library or a museum.

- **You can also help your child get used to listening to instructions at home.**

  Try to make it a game with a prize at the end. A treasure hunt works well. "If you listen carefully to my directions you'll be able to find the special treat I've hidden."

- **Help your child with any weak points.**

  The best way to help your child with literacy is to read stories to them. Make sure they are stories she/he likes. Talk about the picture, the exciting plot and try to use different voices for the characters to keep things lively and fun. Get them to tell the story in their own words.



Perhaps your child is struggling with numbers. Find out from their teacher what she/he is learning and do some in a fun way at home. If it's fractions, ask them to help cut up a cake or a pizza. If it's counting, ask how many steps he/she'll need to reach the end of the garden.

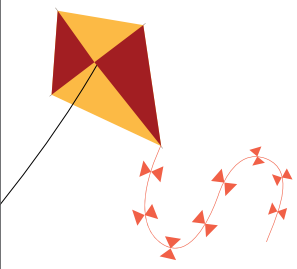
Whatever your child is having difficulty with, stay positive. Getting anxious or cross will only put them off more. Make it a fun experience. You'll probably learn something too!

- **Encourage your child to have educational goals.**

If your actions, as a parent, are determined by thoughts such as 'other children are attending tuition classes, I must enroll my child too' or 'my neighbour's child passed the scholarship exam with flying colours – so I must make sure that my one does the same', it will not help your child understand the importance of learning.

What do children need to learn? And why do they need to learn? It is of no value studying for the sake of it and not knowing why you are studying. Help a child understand the goal and intention of studying. Then assist her/him to achieve this goal.

Ask children not what they want to be when they grow up, but the change they want to make in the world!





This chapter should have given you some ideas on how to motivate your child, who is reluctant to do her/his studies or homework, without using corporal punishment. These positive parenting techniques can be used to bring up a child who enjoys learning and does their studies willingly and with enthusiasm.



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Notes

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ISBN : 978-92-806-5108-9

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April 2023

