

# F O C U S

SPRING 2017

## Why Parents Should Stop Paying Kids to Get Good Grades



It's external. More than 40 years of research suggest that external rewards dampen internal/intrinsic motivation. When you dangle a financial “carrot” for a good grade, you put the emphasis on the reward (payment) instead of cultivating the drive to excel and a love of learning. The child begins to perform not because of intellectual curiosity and interest in a subject, but for the payout. **It presents a classic Give a Mouse a Cookie conundrum.** Kids soon realize that they can continuously up the ante. When \$5 for an “A” doesn't seem worth the effort in a tough class, they look to raise the stakes. May it's \$5 and a movie, or \$10 and a new pair of boots. If your son doesn't enjoy math, will you have to dangle a \$20 payout to keep him motivated? It's a slippery slope, and it doesn't end well. **You become part of an entitlement program.** Paying your kids to do what they should be do-

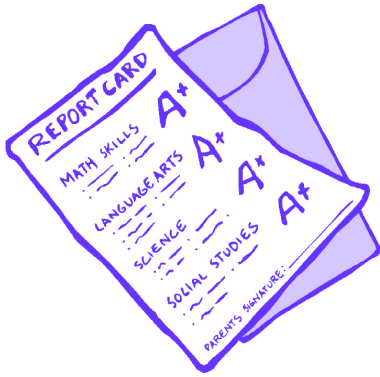
ing anyway—working hard in school and paying attention—creates the perfect environment for entitlement. Before you know it, the “What will I get for it?” attitude prevails, and everything—respect, good manners, household contributions, family time—comes with a price. **You actually demotivate them.** For some kids, A's are just out of reach. Even if they do everything right—study, listen in school, do their homework, seek help when they don't understand—they will still come up short. This leaves them feeling that they aren't good enough, because they haven't met your expectations. It also creates an environment that's ripe for sibling resentment if you have kids with different aptitudes. So what's a parent to do? Try this four-step plan: **1. Emphasize action, not A's.** Instead of grades, focus on the actions, behaviors and attitudes that lead to success. Praise your kids for their efforts

and hard work when you see them studying hard for a test, practicing vocabulary words every night, persevering through challenging problems and putting in extra effort to find the answers they are looking for. After all, these are the behaviors and habits that lead to success in all aspects of life. If your daughter gets a good grade on her chemistry test, link the grade to the hard work it took to accomplish that feat. By focusing on the action, rather than the grade, you will nurture her internal drive to excel, and she won't have to depend on external rewards (payments) to be motivated. **2. Practice the “when-then” routine.** To help your kids develop good study habits, implement simple “when-then” routines that lay out your expectation for how things are done in your family. “When your homework is complete (and I've checked it), then you can play your games.” Stick to your

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(continued) guns and your kids will realize there's no point in arguing about homework.

**3. Help but don't do.** It's hard not to jump in when kids are struggling, and it's important to be helpful. But not too helpful, if you want to foster good work habits. If you've been in the habit of doing more than supporting, consider establishing a homework help policy. Your dialogue should go something like this: "I'm happy to help with homework between 6 and 8pm (this ensures you won't be helping with algebra at 10:30pm, and it forces your child to plan the evening accordingly)—but only after you've completed everything you know how to do and can share with me your thought process for finding the answers you are struggling with."

**4. Put the "no-rescue policy in place—and stick to it!** If you have a kid who forgets a lot, or a "do it for me" kind of kid, it's

time to put responsibility squarely on his shoulders, where it belongs. Tell your kids (upper elementary and above) that they are growing up and are old enough to remember what they need for school, sports and other activities. Let them know that from now on, you will not drive to school with their homework, lunchboxes, permission slips, equipment or anything else when they forge what they need, and they will have to find another solution or experience the consequences of forgetting. Encourage them to find ways to remind themselves, and then refuse to cave when they call or text you that they left their notebook on the table or their book on the counter. It won't be easy to stay the course and not rescue them, but the lessons they will learn about responsibility will far outweigh what they learn when you constantly come to their aid. It's hard to break away from

the way things "have always been done." But if you've been paying for grades, have faith in your kids and make the break. Implement these four steps and watch with pride as they start to show more internal motivation, as they begin to lean into their responsibilities and as they demonstrate intellectual curiosity and a genuine love of learning. That will get them much further in life than a 10 dollar bill for an "A" ever will.

**Source: TODAY Oct. 11, 2016.** Amy McCreedy, founder of [PositiveParentingSolutions.com](http://PositiveParentingSolutions.com) and author of *The "Me, Me, Me" Epidemic: A Step-by-Step Guide to Raising Capable Kids in an Over-Entitled World* as well as *If I Have To Tell You One More Time: The Revolutionary Program That Gets Your Kids to Listen Without Nagging, Reminding, Or Yelling*.

## A Chocolate A Day May Keep Ailments Away!

A chocolate is often seen as an occasional, indulgent treat. But studies show that small amounts of chocolate, the kind that contains natural cocoa and not processed chocolate,

may actually produce health benefits. A study published in the *British Journal of Nutrition* analyzed the chocolate consumption of more than 1,000 people between the

ages of 18-69. Those who consumed an average of nearly an ounce of chocolate per day were found to have reduced risk of developing diabetes and heart disease.

When researchers accounted for other factors such as age, gender, lifestyle, education, and diet, the results remained the same.

**Source: AFFINITY FOR YOU.** Affinity Medical Ctr.

## 6 Ways to Use Your Mind to Control Pain

Drugs are very good at getting rid of pain, but they often have unpleasant, and even serious side effects when used for a long period of time. If you have backache, fibromyalgia, arthritis, or other chronic pain that interferes with your daily life, you may be looking for a way to relieve discomfort that doesn't involve drugs. Some age-old techniques—including meditation and yoga—as well as newer variations may help reduce your need for pain medication. Research suggests that because pain involves both the mind and the body, mind-body therapies may have the capacity to alleviate pain by changing the way you perceive it. How you feel pain is influenced by your genetic makeup, emotions, personality, and lifestyle. It's also influenced by past experience. If you've been in pain for a while, your brain may have rewired itself to perceive pain signals even after the signals aren't being sent anymore. The Benson-Henry Institute for Mind-Body Medicine at Harvard-affiliated Massachusetts General Hospital specializes in helping people learn techniques to alleviate stress, anxiety, and pain. Dr. Ellen Slawsby, an assistant clinical pro-

fessor of psychiatry at Harvard Medical School who works with patients at the Benson-Henry Institute, suggests learning several techniques so that you can settle on the ones that work best for you. "I tend to think of these techniques as similar to flavors in an ice cream store. Depending on your mood, you might want a different flavor of ice cream—or a different technique," Dr. Slawsby says. "Practicing a combination of mind-body skills increases the effectiveness of pain relief." The following techniques can help you take your mind off the pain and may help to override established pain signals. **1. Deep breathing.** It's central to all the techniques, so deep breathing is the one to learn first. Inhale deeply, hold for a few seconds and exhale. To help you focus, you can use a word or a phrase to guide you. For example, you may want to breathe in "peace" and breathe out "tension." there are also several apps for smartphones and tablets that use sound and images to help you maintain breathing rhythms. **2. Eliciting the relaxation response.** An antidote to the stress response, which pumps up heart rate and puts the body's systems on high alert, the relaxa-

tion response turns down your body's reactions. After closing your eyes and relaxing all your muscles, concentrate on deep breathing. When thoughts break through, say "refresh," and return to breathing repetition. Continue doing this for 10 to 20 minutes. Afterwards, sit quietly for a minute or two while your thoughts return. Then open your eyes and sit quietly for another minute. **3. Meditation with guided imagery.** Begin deep breathing, paying attention to each breath. then listen to calming music or imagine being in a restful environment. If you find your mind wandering, say "refresh," and call the image back into focus. **4. Mindfulness.** Pick any activity you enjoy—reading poetry, walking in nature, gardening, or cooking—and become fully immersed in it. Notice every detail of what you are doing and how your senses and emotions are responding.

Practice bringing mindfulness to all aspects of your life. **5. Yoga and tai chi.** These mind-body exercises incorporate breath control, meditation, and movements to stretch and strengthen muscles. Videos and apps can help you get started. If you enroll in a yoga or tai chi class at a gym or health club, your insurance may subsidize the cost. **5. Positive thinking.** "When we're ill, we often tend to become fixated on what we aren't able to do. Retraining your focus on what you can do instead of what you can't will give you a more accurate view of yourself and the world at large." says Dr. Slawsby. She advises keeping a journal in which you list all the things you are thankful for each day. "We may have limitations, but that doesn't mean we aren't still whole human beings."

**Source: Harvard Health Publications, Harvard Medical School, May 2015.**



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our staff is committed to helping you achieve greater emotional wellness and adjustment through individual, child/adolescent, couples, family, and group therapy.**

**We are available to you Monday thru Saturday with day and evening hours for your convenience.**

## **30 Resolution Ideas for 2017**

1. Start a meditation practice.
2. Learn something new every day.
3. Pick up a hobby.
4. Play more.
5. Eat fewer calories.
6. Write a business plan.
7. Move more.
8. Read more books.
9. Be more grateful.
10. Stop procrastinating.
11. Set aside an-hour-a-day to achieve your dreams.
12. Spend more time in nature.
13. Start doing planks or squats everyday.
14. Enjoy the little things.
15. Become more confident.
16. Be more conscientious.
17. Increase your charisma.
18. Increase your IQ.
19. Increase your Emotional Intelligence (EQ).
20. Learn a new skill.
21. Bring more peace into your life.
22. Be kinder to yourself.
23. Create a positive attitude.
24. Strengthen your personal relationship.
25. Tame your “monkey mind”/mental chatter.
26. Keep a journal.
27. Get your documents in order.
28. Travel.
29. Volunteer.
30. Start a blog.

Source: Marelisa Fabrega, lawyer and entrepreneur. <https://daringtolivefully.com/new-year-resolution-ideas>

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