

"How to Motivate Yourself and Your Children"

Dr. Robert E. Wubbolding
 Professor, Xavier University, Cincinnati, U.S.A.

Robert E. Wubbolding, EdD, Director, Center for Reality Therapy, 7777 Montgomery Road, Cincinnati, OH 45230
 513/561-1911



HUMAN MOTIVATION

Forces that drive us, i.e. motivate all our actions

Enemies of successful motivation

1. Belonging (Social Work Family)

Controlling other people and arguing. Both are an attempt to force others to be like me.

2. Achievement, power

Blaming others for my failure. Procrastinating.

3. Fun

Talking myself too seriously, i.e., believing that my way of thinking and living is the "only way".

4. Freedom

Making excuses. This condemns me to making the same mistakes over again.

5. Physical, e.g. food, shelter, security, etc.

Rationalizing my present plight.

Before discussing in detail the sources of human motivation, I would like to ask you to pause for a moment and ask yourselves why you came to this lecture tonight. What prompted you to come out to hear me speak? I suspect you wanted to see some people you knew. You felt that you would be in friendly surroundings. You knew that you would have a sense of belonging. After all, you would hardly come if you had thought that you would be treated badly when you walked into the hallway!!!

This need for belonging is one of the most intense motivators within us. It is why we choose special friends. It is also important to us at work—to be liked and accepted. It is important at home. A family is held together if there is cohesion, i.e. a feeling that the members genuinely are interested in each other. One way to destroy motivation in others is to try to manipulate them or to continually argue with them. These enemies of motivation tell others that "I am better than you. I am superior. You ought to be as I am!!" This approach to others will damage each person's drive to belong.

There is probably another reason you came tonight. You felt you would learn something. You have within you a need or a drive for

achievement. When you accomplish something, learn something, or follow through on a plan, you feel motivated to continue and to take even more effective charge of your life. An enemy of this-drive is blaming others for mistakes and failures. "They are to blame" for my tardiness or inaccuracies. Another way to damage this source of motivation is to procrastinate tasks which, if accomplished, would provide a sense of success or achievement. The high achiever's motto is "Do it now. Do it now. Do it now."

I suspect you came to the talk tonight for still another reason. You hoped you would enjoy yourself. Surely after a hard day, you weren't looking forward to a painful and boring evening!! You wanted to have a pleasant time. This drive for enjoyment is one of the most powerful motivators within us. To smile, to laugh, to engage in a hobby, to see the humorous side of life makes life bearable and even joyous. What could be worse than a boring job? Would you be motivated to advance in your job if it was totally

uninteresting and odious to you? Hardly! The enemy of enjoyment is to take life too seriously, to think that my ways, my values are the ones everyone should adopt. The philosophy of tolerance can be helpful in developing this motivator.

Perhaps you came tonight, also, with the thought that you would, in some small way, be able to be freer in your life because of what you learn. Through educational and inspirational experiences we learn to be free of the bonds of mediocrity, apathy, and confinement. The enemy of this motivator is to make excuses, to justify why "I can't.....", to tell myself "I've never been good at....." or "I'm not the kind of person who can get along with so and so....". This type of thinking will hold me back and damage the motivator of freedom.

A final motivator that prompted some of you to come to this lecture tonight was the desire to better yourself in some financial way. For the more you know about motivating yourself and others the more you will be able to contribute to your own and your family's security. Each profes-

sional experience can be used in some small proximate or remote way to meet your physical needs and achieve the financial security you desire.

The enemy of this motivator is to rationalize my present plight by saying "I'll never do any better than I'm doing now" There is a saying "We have met the enemy and he is us" Rationalizing our present plight is an enemy that resides within each of us. It is dealt with by making positive choices such as those described later.

And so the 5 motivators which drive human beings are Belonging, Achievement, Fun or Enjoyment, Freedom and Physical Needs. These are the forces that are under all human behavior; yours, mine, our employees, our families.

Frequently, I am asked about how a parent can motivate a child. I would like to apply the above ideas to the motivation of children and the motivation of ourselves. There are 3 general ways to motivate a child; by spending time, by talking and by example.

1. By Spending Time.

It is important for a parent to spend "Quality Time" with the children. This QT is not idle time-wasting. Rather to qualify as QT it must have several characteristics.

a. Effort is involved. Playing a game, going for walks, working on hobby, or a mutually agreed upon task take effort.

b. Value is required. The activity should be important to both adult and child, something you both really want to do.

c. Awareness of the other person is required. To go to a movie is less helpful than to play a sport together. Doing a passive activity together will not be as effective for increasing motivation as when there is mutual awareness of the other person.

d. Repetition is required. If your child's motivation is to grow, the activity must be performed regularly. To take walks rarely is not as beneficial as to walk with the child each day. It is better to play a game frequently if not daily.

e. Limited time is sufficient. The activity qualifying as QT can be limited to a brief amount of time. Ten minutes per day is more effective

than one entire weekend a year. Motivation, relationships and strength of character are built in small increments, not by rare bursts of energy.

f. Enjoyment is helpful. If the activity is fun for both you and your child it is more likely to be continued. If you or your child find the event too painful or distasteful it will not be repeated on a regular basis.

2. By Talking.

Talking with your children is a helpful method of increasing motivation. But talk which is most motivating is not talk in the "parental" or conventional sense. Lectures and advice are only marginally useful. To genuinely motivate your child it is helpful to develop questioning skills. For motivation is developed from the inside not imposed by a concerned friend or parent. Yet good questioning skills can be a powerful tool in tapping the driving motivations of Belonging, Achievement, Fun, and Freedom in a child. I suggest the following types of questions:

a. Questions about the wants of the child. Helping your child set goals and formulate precise determinations about wants is helpful. A parent should ask the child what he wants in school, from friends, from parents. Ask what he expects from himself, what he wants educationally, socially, physically, etc. The human brain is designed to have wants and goals. A person without a clear goal is like a ship without a rudder. It is buffeted about by contrary winds.

b. Questions about time. Parental questions about how the child spends time are useful. What happened at school? What did the teachers say? What did the students do and say? How did you spend your time today? Such questions help your child develop a sense of belonging with a parent.

c. Questions related to evaluation. The most motivating types of questions revolve around helping children evaluate their own wants and their own behavior. Instead of lecturing. I suggest asking your child such questions as: Is what you want realistic? When you did such and such, was it helpful? Did that behavior help or hurt the situation?

3. By showing an Outstanding Example of High Motivation.

If you are to motivate your children I suggest that you increase your own level of motivation. "Nobody gives what he hasn't got." By developing a self-improvement plan to increase motivation, you will reap vast professional rewards. But the greatest reward will be an increase in the energy and motivation of your children. Below are contained ten suggestions for developing a self-improvement or self-motivation plan.

a. Choose everyday to deepen a relationship with one person. This implies a conscious decision to smile, to take an interest in someone, to do someone a favor etc.

b. Choose everyday to learn more about another person; what he/she thinks, feels, likes, dislikes, or wants out of life.

c. Choose everyday to do something you've been procrastinating. Adopt the motto "Do it Now."

d. Choose everyday to laugh at yourself. Present your ideas as *your* ideas, not as absolute, immutable dogmas that everyone must believe.

e. Choose everyday to take responsibility for your successes and failure, rather than blaming the boss, the government, the environment, the unions, the weather, etc.

f. Choose everyday to read your own personal philosophy of life. This might require some research and study to find a positive, hopeful, and personal description of what you believe is important. It need not be lengthy but it should be personally meaningful.

g. Choose to read some positive literature regularly. "We are what we are because of what goes into our minds." If we put positive ideas in we will produce positive behaviors.

h. Choose to select something you want, no matter how "impossible" it is. Insert into your mind a specific picture of what you want. Then begin to take small steps to achieving it.

i. Choose slogans which you repeat everyday. Just as prayers are repeated everyday, motivational slogans should be repeated such as "Yes, indeed, I succeed" "If it is to be it's up to me", etc.

j. Choose everyday to contribute to your financial future. This might be as simple as merely reading the financial page of the newspaper. It need not be a grandiose choice but it should be a conscious, specific decision motivated by the desire to improve yourself.

In summary, motivation begins and is maintained from within each

human beings are Belonging, Achievement, Enjoyment, Freedom and Physical drives. These can be taught to children and others with effort through questioning. Imposing motivation on someone is a contradiction in terms. Nevertheless, as parents we can help children to make better choices by being unrelentingly and highly motivated ourselves and