

Motivation & Positive Discipline

One of the most challenging tasks tutors face is how to motivate students who are having difficulty in school. If you are working with more than one student, you may find that each learns, behaves, and reacts differently.

What can you do to help students learn when they seem unmotivated or act out in ways that disrupt learning? One of the most helpful things to remember is this: when students act out, it is because they have a need that is not being met. Most problem behaviors are a way of asking for help, not a reaction to you, as a tutor.

Why do Students Fail to Complete Work or Act Out?

Students may fail to complete work or act out because:

- They lack self-confidence.
- They have a learning disability and feel frustrated about not being able to do certain tasks.
- The assigned work is too difficult for their skill level.
- They feel defeated because in the past when they have tried hard, they have still failed.
- Circumstances in their personal lives are difficult and their basic needs are not being met.
- They have never learned to trust an adult for assistance.
- They have difficulty getting along with peers and may act out in appropriate ways.
- They have ADD or ADHD and have difficulty staying on task.

As a tutor, what can you do?

It's obvious that you cannot solve all the difficulties a student has! What you can do is help students during the tutoring session to focus on learning, to get their school needs met, and to feel good about their work and worth as human beings. In order to do this, you will need to consider both motivation and discipline.

Motivating Students to Learn

What motivates students? Some students work hard simply because they want to learn and succeed in school. Some students seem to need a lot of attention and praise to boost their confidence. Still others seem to need a reward system or special privileges.

In order to motivate students you must help them learn to recognize and get meaning from their own accomplishments. You can do this by:

- Setting goals** that give students a purpose for learning and help them in getting their school needs met.
- Providing individual attention**, guidance and support
- Keeping a record** of student's goals and progress
- Giving students praise** & positive feedback for their efforts
- Providing incentives** for good behavior and work completed

Setting Goals

With all students, set a goal each time you meet to give them a purpose for learning. The goal should be something that will help them meet their needs and move toward school success. You can set daily, weekly, or project goals—depending on how much focus a student needs. Always set a goal a student can reach so that if they put forth effort they will succeed in meeting the goal. Goals may be related to Learning, Behavior, or Work Habits.

EXAMPLES

Learning Goals

to read...3 pages...this chapter...this story...as much as I can
to finish...this assignment...this paper...these questions
to study for this test...to prepare for this presentation
to learn to read and spell words

Behavior Goals

To respect myself...by not calling myself dumb...by not giving up...by keeping myself safe...by asking for help
to take a time out when I get frustrated or angry
to not interrupt when someone is talking
to help Martin with his writing

Work Habits, Efforts and Attitude Goals

to start my work in 2 minutes
to ask for help when I need it
to try my hardest
to find a book to read...activity to do...when I am done with the assignment

Giving Individual Attention and Assistance

Many students begin to improve their work when they receive on-on-one assistance and support from a tutor. If you are working with one or more students, try to give each equal support. Students may need assistance in different areas but all students benefit from attention, support, and praise. Research shows that we tend to ignore students who are quiet or shy and have good behavior. Research also shows that student success depends on receiving individual support and in being made an equal part of the group or class process. Be sure to include all students in group activities and discussions.

Keeping a record of student's goals and progress

You can help students be motivated by keeping a record of their work and progress.



My Goals and How I Did!

Name: _____ **Date:** _____

Assignment: _____

Goals: _____

What I did well today: _____

What I learned today: _____

What I would like to learn next: _____

Giving Praise and Feedback

Find something specific to praise students about each time you work with them. Praise may be about:

WHAT THEY LEARNED

Wow, you learned three new words today...
You did a really good job of answering these questions...
I liked the way you read your favorite page...
You did two more problems than yesterday...
You are really getting good at finding main ideas...
You really know your stuff for this test...

HOW THEY BEHAVED, THEIR ATTITUDES

Thanks for getting right to work today...
Thanks for asking for help instead of getting angry...
Thanks for taking time out when you were getting upset...
Thanks for listening while Keesha read...
Thanks for working so hard...
Thanks for doing such good work...
Thanks for staying safe and not tipping back your chair...

THEIR IDEAS & CREATIONS

That was an awesome idea
I like the way you answered that question
This is a fantastic picture...model...report...
Thanks for sharing...your story...your ideas...your feelings

Developing Incentives

Some students will need to be given daily incentives or privileges. For example: a student might set a goal to work for twenty minutes and then have 10 minutes of choice time at each tutoring session. Another student might need to get a sticker for each assignment they do.

PRIVILEGES MIGHT INCLUDE:

Choice Time—student chooses an activity
Time to read a favorite book...listen to a tape/CD...computer time...
Time to draw...create...make...imagine...wish...act...do...
Time to tell a story of their own...to talk...to share...
Time to write in a journal...record thoughts on tape...
Time to play a learning game...riddles...a thinking game...
A sticker or stamp on the top of their page
Nice notes to student
Food, school supplies, art supplies, movie passes

Providing Students with Positive Discipline

It's important to remember that most discipline problems occur when students *are not getting their needs met in some way*. For example, one student has poor skills and has difficulty learning. Instead of asking for help, he takes his frustration out on himself by ruining his own paper and on others by kicking them and disrupting their work. He needs to learn how to recognize what he needs (help with his work) and to ask for it, instead of getting angry and hurting himself and others.



You can help students succeed in school by teaching them how to get their needs met in appropriate ways. In order to do this, you will need to:

- Set some guidelines for behavior during tutoring sessions
- When students act out, assist them in changing their behaviors—Provide alternatives to acting out

Setting Basic Guidelines and Rules

Set guidelines to let students know what you expect. Choose no more than 1-5 rules. Keep the rules simple and clear. For example, you could ask students to agree to the following:

I will do my best to:

- Respect myself
- Respect others
- Be safe
- Do my best work

To set guidelines for behavior:

While these are simple guidelines, they cover a lot of territory. If the student scribbles on his own paper, he is not respecting himself. If he kicks another student he is not respecting others. If he throws his pencil, he is not being safe. If another student refuses to read, she is not doing her best work.



Almost all behaviors will fall under one of these four basic rules:

1. Choose up to five simple, clear guidelines or rules.
2. Present your rules and expectations to students within the first week of tutoring.
3. You may wish to write the rules on a piece of poster board you put up at each tutoring session.
4. Use role play to demonstrate the rules

FOUR BASIC RULES OF BEHAVIOR

Respecting Myself could include:

- ❖ Knowing I am an awesome person
- ❖ Doing my best work
- ❖ Trying my hardest
- ❖ No put downs or calling myself names
- ❖ Saying what I feel instead of acting out
- ❖ Asking for help when I need it
- ❖ Taking a time out when I need to calm down

Respecting Others could include:

- ❖ No putdowns or name calling
- ❖ Taking turns
- ❖ Listening when others are reading or talking
- ❖ No hitting, kicking or fighting
- ❖ No disturbing others when they are working
- ❖ Asking before I borrow something
- ❖ Knowing that I can have an idea and someone else can have an idea and that's ok.
- ❖ Responding to what others feel and need

Being Safe could include:

- ❖ Not hurting myself
- ❖ Not hurting others, keeping my hands & feet to myself
- ❖ Not tripping in my chair
- ❖ Not running in the hall
- ❖ Not throwing a pencil, paper clip, etc.
- ❖ Going to the bathroom with a buddy

Doing My Best Work could include:

- ❖ Getting to tutoring sessions on time
- ❖ Bringing materials to session
- ❖ Getting right to work
- ❖ Using time well
- ❖ Trying my hardest
- ❖ Listening to directions
- ❖ Trying to work on my own before asking for help



Assisting Students When They Act Out

Once you have set your expectations, there will still be times when students act out and use behaviors that are not o.k. First, you need to stop the inappropriate behavior and make sure the student and others are safe. It is also important to find out why the student acted out and help them choose better ways to help them get their needs met. Making students take an active role in changing their behavior helps them learn how to solve problems and to react in ways that will help them get their needs met.

You can use the model below to help students change their behaviors.

<p>STOP the behavior</p>	<p>Sean, you cannot kick Celia. I need you to sit over here until you can calm down and we can talk.</p>
<p>Ask the student what s/he NEEDS</p>	<p>What was going on? What did you need? ... she wouldn't give me the blue crayon...so I kicked her right in her ugly leg...So you needed a blue crayon...</p>
<p>Discuss OPTIONS (What else could the student have done to get what s/he needed?)</p>	<p>Sean, kicking is not o.k. You needed a blue crayon and Celia would not give it to you. What else could you have done? grabbed it away... Grabbing is not o.k. What else could you have done?... I don't know...You could ask Celia to let you know when she was done using the blue crayon...you could ask her to trade you her blue one for your red one when she was done using blue...no, she still wouldn't let me...then you can ask me for help...or ask for another box of crayons...</p>
<p>Ask the student to state their need and CHOOSE A SOLUTION (What do you need & How can you get it?) (What is the problem & How can you solve it?)</p>	<p>Sean...We often share pencils, crayons, paper, books...The next time you need a crayon or pencil what can you do?...If I need a crayon, I can wait until somebody is done...I could trade...or I could ask you for one...</p>
<p>Make the behavior change part of the student's weekly GOALS.</p>	<p>O.K. Let's make this one of your goals: When I need something I will use my words to ask for help instead of kicking or hitting or grabbing.</p>
<p>You may also wish to set CONSEQUENCES for negative behaviors.</p>	<p>Sean...I also need to tell you that if you kick or hit again, you will need to work over here, away from the other students. You also need to tell Celia you should not have kicked her. Let's go talk to Celia.</p>



Another Option is Time Out. You can also help by having options that allow them to check themselves out of a situation in which they are about to act out. For example, if a student gets angry often, you may wish to plan with him ahead of time how he can check himself out of a group situation when he feels himself going out of control.

Suppose **Sean** feels himself getting angry. The plan might be that he will get up from the tutoring session and go to a safe place where he can take a time out. In time out, he can think about why he got angry and make a decision about how to handle his anger. His choices might be: to write about his feelings in a journal; to continue his work on his own; to return to the group once he has calmed down; to wait until you have had a chance to talk with him and resolve the problem. This gives Sean a chance to recognize his own feelings and needs and to take control of himself so he doesn't hurt himself or others.

Here are some other examples of students and how you might use positive discipline with them.

Jorge is a pleasure to work with! He still needs to set goals, to get individual support, and to receive praise. Too often, students who behave well are ignored. You might try to think of tasks that will challenge Jorge to become an even better student and leader.

Marta seems to lack motivation. She may have little self-confidence, be afraid to admit she needs help with her work, or simply needs lots of support and attention. You can help Marta by getting her to set a simple goal for each day, giving her support and praise for each small step that she takes, and by taking an active part in doing her assignments with her. You may also need to provide Marta with a very specific reward system, a prize or privilege for each day's work. Gradually, as Marta does better in school, you may be able to move her away from daily rewards. For example, instead of earning stickers or pencils every day, she might move toward earning points that will buy her a privilege like choosing a game to play or a movie pass.

Ben wants to work but has difficulty holding still long enough to get his work done. Sometimes students who are ADD, learning disabled, or experiencing chaos in their personal lives may have difficulty concentrating or staying on task. You can help Ben by working with him one-on-one in a place that is quiet and has few distractions and/or by allowing him to work on a computer to focus his attention in one place. This will help him to focus and concentrate as well as keep him from disrupting others during quiet work time. You can also help Ben by setting expectations that allow him some freedom of movement and goals that will help him get his work done. For example you might provide him with freedom of movement by asking him to work ten minutes and then allowing him to go get a drink or walk up and down the hall for a minute. You might allow him to change chairs whenever he needs to, sit on his knees, or stand to work as long as he is getting his work done. You might also try helping him learn in kinesthetic ways that allow him to use body movement. Focusing on his work, rather than his behaviors—which may be annoying but harmless—will help.



The goals and guidelines you choose should help students get their needs met and give the tutoring sessions an atmosphere you as a tutor can live. It is important to remember that every student is different and has individual needs. For example:

- Students with learning disabilities* may regularly forget paper, pencil, or book—this is part of their disability and not willful behavior on their part. You might want to reward them for remembering supplies as part of their daily goals, but not punish them for not remembering.
- Students from chaotic homes* may not be able to get right to work but may need the first few minutes to debrief—to talk or write or share. Again, you might set a goal that says students will work for 20 out of the 30 minutes.
- Students from varied cultures* may have different standards for learning and behaving. For example, in cultures that teach cooperation, children may be used to learning by talking, working, and sharing with others—which could be viewed as “cheating, interrupting, and disturbing others” in another culture. You could help students by allowing them to use a variety of learning styles and processes.

In setting goals and guidelines, you must pick and choose which behaviors are most important to you as a tutor, which will give students the support they need to learn, and which are the most important in terms of your student’s needs.

