

Adaptability

Adaptability is about how you respond to your child, especially when things do not go as planned. Your child will have a variety of great days, bad days, and everything in between. Here are a few ways you can apply adaptability to your parenting and keep your child motivated:

Intrinsic Motivation:

1. Choices

What do you do if your child does not want to do something?

You can intrinsically motivate them by allowing them to make choices or small decisions. Before I began using healthy competition to encourage my child to brush his teeth, I had to physically put the toothbrush in his mouth and brush for him. I eventually realized that I had to adapt differently because it was not working. He needed to learn to brush himself.

I took him to the store and let him pick out 2 toothbrushes to get him more interested in brushing his own teeth. Being adaptable meant giving him some choices so he felt more involved and motivated. Now he has 24 toothbrushes!

If your child is a picky eater, try giving them choices about what you buy at the grocery store for dinner. Let them pick if they want chicken or steak, for instance. Then, pick out a couple of good options and let them pick again. Now they have a vested interest in the meal. Finally, get them involved in making dinner, emphasizing that they helped to pick out the food that is being served for dinner. Take it a step further and work on creating a recipe together.

2. Make it Exciting

Build up the excitement when you want or need your child to do something. If you tell a bunch of 7 to 9-year-old children to do push-ups, for example, do you think they will be excited? Instead, if you give them options and motivated instructions, they will excel.

Do you think they would rather do just a few push-ups or would they do more if you told them that they would become "one of the most awesome and strong students in class!" by doing a few more? Chances are that they will choose to become awesome and strong. This type of intrinsic motivation excites them to make an extra effort.

3. Compromise

Another form of adaptability through intrinsic motivation is compromising when responding to your child's requests. If your child comes home from school and wants a treat, but you want him to wait for dinner first, they may throw a temper tantrum or get upset because they didn't get their way.

Providing a compromise that doesn't affect their appetite before dinner but allows them to get what they want keeps the situation in perspective. For example, let them know that they can have two gummy bears out of the bag now, and the rest after dinner. This is a way to adapt to their request and keeps within your rules about not eating snacks that will spoil their appetite for dinner.

Extrinsic Motivation

4. Kids Like to See You Suffer!

Sometimes you need to pull out the pain card! Kids like to see you suffer or pay the price in some way. You may use an extrinsic motivation such as, "If you can do this drill without any mistakes, I'll do push-ups!" They want to see you suffer through the push-ups, and they will do whatever it takes to make you have to do them.

I use this concept with my son. If he starts to procrastinate just as we are headed out the door, I use healthy competition and extrinsic motivation to get him moving! I tell him that if he runs to the car faster than me, I'll do ten jumping jacks. He wins the race every time because he really wants me to do the jumping jacks. Then, he counts everyone one of them off as I do them. Being an adaptable parent means using external motivation when necessary.

As you consider your level of adaptability today, ask yourself if you ever apply similar intrinsic or extrinsic motivation to your child. If not, consider adding them to your parenting tool kit. Your child's behavior will change based on their mood, so the best way to parent is to adapt to their day as best as possible.