



Priceless<sup>®</sup>  
Parenting

"Training for your  
most important job"

## Priceless Parenting Newsletter March 2010

Dear Parents,

Some parents attending one of my recent presentations asked how they could motivate their children to work harder on their school work. They wanted their children not to just skate by with the minimum effort but rather put in the extra energy to really excel at their studies.

Do you wish your children were more motivated? This month we'll explore some new ideas that researchers have learned about motivation.

I'd also like to ask for your opinion on parenting presentation topics. Please answer this one question survey about what [parenting topics you would like to see in a one hour presentation](#).

Warm Regards,

Kathy Slattengren

P.S. I hope you enjoy this newsletter. Please do me a favor and forward this to a friend who also may enjoy reading it.



## The Challenges of Motivating Children

How can we motivate our children to work harder in school, in a sport or in practicing an instrument? Will the promise of a reward for practicing the piano help our child practice more? Or will the threat of punishment be more effective? When we try to motivate our children to work harder, we can often end up feeling frustrated by the results.

### Understanding Internal Motivation

Ideas about motivation are changing as new research teases out some of the key elements. According to Daniel Pink's latest book, *Drive: The Surprising Truth About What Motivates Us*, trying to motivate children using external rewards and punishment is a mistake. The secret for motivating children to high performance lies in allowing their own internal drive to direct their behavior.

### Online Class + Kathy

**Last chance** to take the instructor led version of the online class until next fall.

- \* **Starts April 19th**
- \* **10 hours STARS credit**
- \* **\$139**
- \* [Register now!](#)

### Quick Links

[Register for Priceless Parenting Class](#)

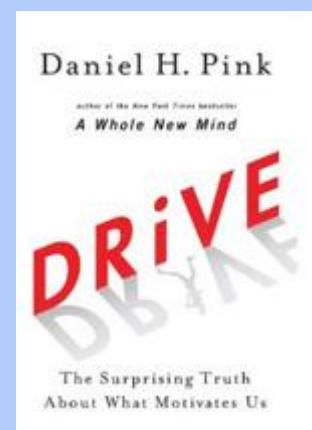
[Parenting Presentations](#)

[Our Blog](#)

[Newsletter Archive](#)

[Join Our Mailing List!](#)

### Other Resources



Parenting Book

Pink describes three elements of true motivation:

- **Autonomy** - the need to direct our own lives
- **Mastery** - the desire to make progress in our work
- **Purpose** - the ability to positively impact ourselves and our world

For example, if you want your child to practice the piano more, try allowing her to choose when to practice, what music to focus on and where to perform that will bring delight to someone else.

### Trying to Control Too Much

When we try to motivate our children, it sometimes backfires as they dig in their heels and refuse to buckle under the pressure. By attempting to exert control over our children's behavior, we are reducing their autonomy - one of the key elements of internal motivation.

One mom was describing her frustration in getting her daughter to practice the piano. No matter how hard she tried her daughter sat on the piano bench refusing to put her fingers on the keys. This is a typical control battle and one that mom is likely to lose since her daughter ultimately controls what she does with her fingers!

How do we know when we've stepped over the line and are trying to control too much of our children's behavior? Luckily children are pretty good at letting us know when we've stepped over that line. If you hear your child saying any of the following, you're probably over the line:

- "You're not the boss of me!"
- "I'm not going to do that!"
- "You can't make me."
- "Why do you always get to choose?"

At this point it is wise to take a step back and look at what we are trying to accomplish and consider other approaches.

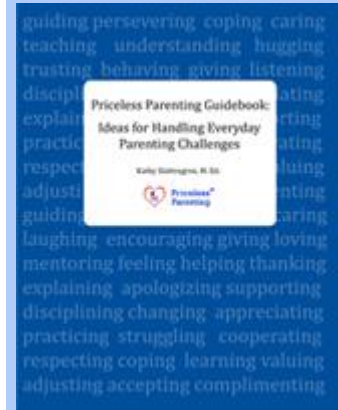
### Motivating to Perfection

Psychologist Robert W. Hill of Appalachian State University found that when people are trying hard because of their own desire for excellence, this effort can lead to greater satisfaction and mental health. However, if the pressure to perform is coming from others, it's likely to lead to dissatisfaction and reduced well-being.

In the article "[The Two Faces of Perfection](#)", Hill is quoted as saying

*"Kids need to get the message, 'You need to have high standards, but you don't need to be perfect.' If you have unreachable goals and you're constantly dissatisfied with yourself, you can be miserable. Unequivocally, you don't want a parent who is constantly criticizing, so the child develops a self-scrutiny that always finds fault with their own*

The [Priceless Parenting Guidebook: Ideas for Handling Everyday Parenting Challenges](#) provides practical advice using real parenting stories.



*performance."*

While we all want our children to try hard and make good choices, in order to accomplish this we need to allow them to practice making those choices. Some of the choices they make will not be so good and that will give them an opportunity to learn from their mistakes.

By giving our children the chance to develop their self-motivation, we encourage them to grow and find their own internal strengths.

### **This Month's Challenge: What motivates them?**

This month's challenge is to observe your children and figure out when each one is the most motivated. What is it they will gladly do without being asked? What activities bring them joy? Ask them what they do to motivate themselves when they don't feel like doing something.

### **Last Month's Challenge: Discussing the Birds & Bees**

Last month you were challenged to have at least one conversation with your children about sexuality. How did it go? If you had trouble getting the conversation started, [books can be a wonderful resource](#) for help.

### **Seattle Area Presentations**

#### **Wired and Wild? Teaching Responsibility in a Connected World**

Monday, May 10th 7:00 - 8:00 PM

Phinney Neighborhood Association

\$20 at the door, [\\$15 in advance](#)

#### **Taking the Stress Out of Parenting and Building Great Relationships with Your Children**

Tuesday, May 25th 9:30 - noon

Shoreline Community College - Lake Forest Park

Call 206-546-4101 to register: \$39, class 7100

#### **"Why Can't You Behave?" Ideas for Positively Handling**

## Misbehavior

Monday, June 14th 6:00 - 8:30 PM

Shoreline Community College - main campus

Call 206-546-4101 to register: \$39

---

### Follow Kathy online:



<http://twitter.com/PricelessParent>



<http://www.facebook.com/kathy.slattengren>



<http://www.linkedin.com/in/kathyslattengren>