

40 WAYS TO BUILD SELF-DISCIPLINE AND INTRINSIC MOTIVATION

1. Build an environment where children can have success, from knowing where they can find things, to having things at their level, to being responsible for their belongings.
2. Create opportunities for them to build independence so they see themselves as capable.
3. Cultivate opportunities for them to work together, cooperate, and care for others so they see their input matters.
4. Value curiosity—learning is about finding things out rather than memorizing facts.
5. Allow them to have (age-appropriate) choices so they have agency in their days.
6. Provide different ways for them to learn—we all learn in different ways, and different activities appeal to different types of learners (kinesthetic, visual, and/or aural learners).
7. Develop their thinking skills—they are learning through hands-on experience and making discoveries for themselves; they help siblings/visitors consolidating their own learning; they reflect on what they have learned.
8. Keep it real—they are not learning just for the sake of learning, but learning how knowledge is applied in the real world, giving meaning to their work.
9. As much as possible, avoid testing or punishing them—this maintains their creativity and interest in learning.
10. Let them make errors when they're engaging in activities—allow them to discover their errors and try again.
11. Offer activities that challenge them at the right level—but not so hard that they want to give up.
12. Help them build skills—for example, planning, dressing themselves, learning to use tools.
13. Scaffold skills—each activity builds on the next to allow mastery.
14. Put the child in charge of their own learning—they learn uniquely, have their own unique interests, and are on their unique timeline.
15. Present the possibility for big work and big ideas that look at the interdisciplinary nature of the universe.
16. Set safe limits—offer security and show someone cares about them.
17. Establish a clear rhythm to their day so they know what to expect.
18. Be their guide, not their boss or servant.
19. Support them in developing their own routines/rhythms, like for getting dressed or going to bed.

20. Model intrinsic motivation—our actions are more powerful than our words.
21. Trust the process without forcing our own agenda.
22. Be patient—learning happens at its own pace and isn't forced.
23. Plant seeds of curiosity—enough to get them interested but not too many, to allow them to discover the rest for themselves.
24. Avoid criticizing or correcting; instead, observe where they are at and offer another opportunity to learn a skill.
25. Avoid sticker charts or praise—helps them look to themselves and not to someone else.
26. Value process over product—there is more learning in the doing than in the result.
27. Offer honest instructive feedback rather than hollow praise—we see what's going well and can provide gentle guidance about how they can do better or keep improving.
28. Teach them to respect themselves, each other, and the environment, so that they feel truly accepted and learn to accept others.
29. Show them how to look after themselves, others, and the environment—it's empowering to be able to do this.
30. Make agreements together so they feel like a valued member of the community/family.
31. Provide a safe place for them to practice boundaries—we can support them with words if needed: "I'd like to play by myself right now. The toy will be available soon."
32. Honor who they are—acknowledging that each family member is a unique and valued part builds their sense of self.
33. Show trust in them by removing external rewards and punishments.
34. Help them make a repair when needed—they'll know that when they get it wrong, they will take responsibility and learn from the experience.
35. Encourage service in the community—for example, volunteering and seeing the impact of their work.
36. Ensure that there is a healthy relationship with failure—the adults in their life are supportive; they can keep trying to work at something until they master it; and they learn to ask for help if needed.
37. Support them in being a member of their society.
38. Allow space for all voices—we want everyone in our community to feel valued, accepted, and safe.
39. Encourage them to learn from others—they can see others learning and be inspired to learn that too.
40. Observe, adjust the environment, and review.