

# POSITIVE Parents & Children



## Help your kids develop their internal locus of control

As adults, we've learned that to get the job done, we need to be self motivated and put the effort in. Hopefully, we've learned by now that there's little point in relying on luck, or the help of others, or waiting until the planets are aligned. Our kids are dependent on us as parents for much that happens in their life. But it's important they learn to develop an early awareness that the 'place' where learning originates and is controlled is inside them. It's called 'internal locus of control'.....a big term for little kids....and us as parents...

## What is 'internal locus of control'?

The word 'locus' simply means 'place'. An internal locus (place) of control is where a person believes they can influence the events of their lives through their decisions and efforts. An internal locus of control means a greater degree of internal self-control, self-motivation and the influence we have on others and our environment. It can also mean that we're likely to be more intellectually curious and active as regards our own learning.

An external locus of control is the exact opposite. A person may believe that everything that happens to them is due to luck, or others, or factors beyond their control. Many children with an external locus of control for learning, mistakenly believe that "everything will turn out okay whether I work or not". They fail to see the connection between their own efforts and achievement and ultimately success.

## Where does natural ability fit?

It's an easy out for kids to believe that either you're born being good at something or you're not, and if you're not, there is little point in trying. Developing an internal locus of control can influence a child's concept of ability. Understanding the connection between trying and practicing and achieving a successful outcome, leads to the belief that it's the trying, not the ability you were born with, that leads to success.

It's important for young children to recognise the importance of persistent effort. When kids attribute their success to luck or the ease of the task, they're likely to lose motivation. Attributing success to the fact that they worked hard and put in a lot of effort, leads to strong motivation.

## Ways we can help our kids develop a strong internal locus of control

- Rethink any plans of being a helicopter parent.
- Encourage responsibility for everyday living. Explain the task, ask if they've got any questions or need help and then step back and trust in their ability to complete whatever needs to be done.

- Provide opportunities for success. Choose something that interests your child and give them the space to be motivated to organise, plan, and work towards a project or goal.
- Praise appropriately, specifically and honestly, especially praise for perseverance and working through a problem.
- Give out messages about the importance of effort as opposed to results.
- Provide feedback immediately when a task has been completed.
- Help your child to identify how they feel when they've achieved through their own efforts. 'How did you accomplish that?' 'What did you learn?' 'How does it feel to have achieved something under your own steam?' 'You must feel very proud of yourself'.

When it comes to our kids, we want them to achieve and feel good about themselves based on their own conclusions rather than relying on constant praise and encouragement or over-involved parents who bail them out when their schoolwork isn't finished on time. When kids understand that trying, perseverance and practicing is something they have control over, there's little in the self-belief stakes that will hold them back and the taste of success can be very sweet indeed.