

WHAT IS SO DIFFICULT ABOUT DOING HOMEWORK

Okay, you have resolved some of the more obvious issues. You have systems in place to help insure that the proper information and materials arrive home with our child. Your child has been given a second set of books to keep at home. Yet, somehow, getting the homework completed at a quality level and returned to school in a timely manner is still a concern. What is your role, what are your resources, and what are your options? The first part of this question is perhaps the most intriguing. If you have a child who struggles, even battles, when it comes to completing homework perhaps the first place to look is at your personal philosophy about what your responsibility is here and the beliefs you project to your child.

For a majority of children, completing homework is a fact of life. While they may not enjoy it, and may in fact struggle at times, they accept that it is part of their daily routine 10 months of the year. Then there are the “other” kids. The one’s who avoid or resist completing homework for a variety of reasons. Where it’s not just a matter of supporting them in their efforts, rather it’s a battle to get them to actually DO the work.

As parents, we have a lens to the future and often feel the pangs of worry when things don’t move along, as they seemingly should. Parents often worry that if their child doesn’t work to their potential they might miss out on valuable opportunities both now and in the future. The painful part of this is the seeming lack of recognition or regard that their child may have of these concerns.

A typical response to these concerns is often to provide some sort of external motivation: rewards and/or punishments. However, for many children, these often do little to durably improve their work ethic. So, let’s return to the question I posed earlier: What is your role? Well, some of that will depend on your child. Most children recognize that they SHOULD be doing their work. And they are well aware that not doing so is creating tremendous tension and problems for them. If your child has been resisting doing their work, chances are they are having an internal struggle that goes beyond being able to simply just “give in” and do their work. Your role is to help them figure out what the struggle is truly about. There are often many clues, but the answers may not be as obvious as they may appear. In a non-judgmental, supportive conversation, help your child identify what is getting in the way, what their perspective is on the true difficulty. You may be very surprised by their answer.

If your child is truly resisting doing their homework, try looking at these areas first.

1. How do they view their ability to be successful in working independently?
2. How is their ability to maintain focus at the end of the school day?

3. Are they getting the essential amount of sleep, nutrition and exercise?
4. Are they battling depression or anxiety?
5. Are the expectations placed on them realistic in their eyes?

Some children, especially during the teen years, struggle internally with the push/pull for independence while still truly needing help. I recall the famous book by Anthony Wolf: Get out of My Life, but first would you drive me and Cheryl to the mall? Paradoxically, the well-meaning actions of parents are occasionally the very triggers that prevent some children from moving forward. If you recognize that your child, for what ever reason, is having difficulty sharing their concerns with you, reach out for the help of a trained Parent Coach or therapist.

Maybe your parenting role is not what you thought it was. Some kids don't need a fire under them, what they need is to have the pressure taken off of them and someone to partner with them in uncovering and tackling the true problem. Reconsidering your own explanation to the homework struggle and responding to differently can often make all the difference.

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