

MOTIVATION -- ideas that work

As parents we are constantly looking for ways to motivate our students -- and ourselves -- in Suzuki and in all aspects of our lives. The following ideas are extracted from several discussions with Suzuki teachers around the country. Maybe there is an idea here you can adapt for your situation.

SITUATIONS THAT MOTIVATE US ARE.....

- \* situations where we feel 99% successful and in control -- "ability breeds ability";
- \* situations where evaluation is not part of the goal -- 'fun times' such as free swim time as opposed to being on the swim team;
- \* situations where the actions result in a long term pleasurable goal -- a diet so you look better in next summer's bathing suit;
- \* situations where you desire to please someone else or yourself;
- \* situations that are rewarded with immediate pleasurable activity -- otherwise known as bribery.

Some ways in which these 'motivating situations' can be applied to practice:

...work in small steps when introducing new skills so your child will be assured of success;

...use review pieces to teach new skills to increase the odds of success;

..."You get what you stroke." Try saying something like, "I really love your good posture today " and you will be rewarded with improved posture;

...make 'nostalgia tapes' -- tape current pieces and store them away for 6 months -- when they are played for your student later, the obvious progress will motivate further efforts;

...end each practice session on a positive note -- use a review piece or a piece which will guarantee your student's success that day;

...never equate love with accomplishment -- LOVE IS UNCONDITIONAL;

...keep your evaluations objective;

...attend concerts, create opportunities for your student to observe other musicians at work in a variety of situations -- public TV, youth orchestra concerts, records and tapes of concerts, open rehearsals, concerts -- the more music they see and hear, they more they learn;

...'contracts' or short term agreements can be powerfully motivating to young students -- try negotiating an overnight after a successful week of practice, or other enticements that work in your family;

...remember to allow for six days of practice in a week in your contracts -- so the first missed day does not automatically mean failure and the reversal of your motivating goal.

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thoughts on motivation from Evelyn Hermann, taken from the book "The Man Who Discovered the Secrets of the Universe".....

*"Too much instruction creates too much trying."*

*"Images are better than words."*

*"Conscious trying creates tension."*

*"We must first believe the act is possible."*

*"Unlearn judgements."*

*"Don't fight old habits -- start new habits to replace them."*

*"Make changes step by step."*

*"Nudge, don't push."*

*"Imprint through example."*

*"Let go -- and let your child learn."*

books that have motivational ideas of interest to Suzuki parents:

"Your Child's Self-Esteem" by Dorothy Corkille Briggs

"To Learn with Love" by William Starr

"Self-Esteem is a Family Affair" by Jean Clark

"The Inner Game of Tennis" by Suin Gallway

*"The natural condition of the learner is to not be able to do what you are asking him to do. Otherwise he would not be a learner."*

William Starr