

Exploring Motivation & Control

Why, why, why?? Name: _____
What does something you really don't want to do, do it anyway? What if you just don't do it?
Why brush your teeth twice a day?
Why are you homeschooled?
Why aren't you in public school?
Why do you do math?
Is history important to learn? Why or why not?
Why are you saving money... or are you?
Why keep your room clean? (usually... or is it messy?)
Why go to college? Why join the military?
Why help others? Why volunteer?
Why learn a language?
Why do you watch TV shows YouTube videos on
Why play games?
Why work hard?

Our Goals Name: _____
Choose a...
Time to get up (in order to get everything done)? _____ Therefore choose the time you need to go to bed to make this happen _____
Morning routine _____
Lunch _____
Dinner _____
What is my biggest need: _____
How much time to clean your room... _____ once a day/week
Friday classes: This is what I will do by the Friday _____

How much time do you need for...
Math _____
Computer science _____
Music practice _____
Reading/Literature _____
This semester I really don't like to spend too much time on...

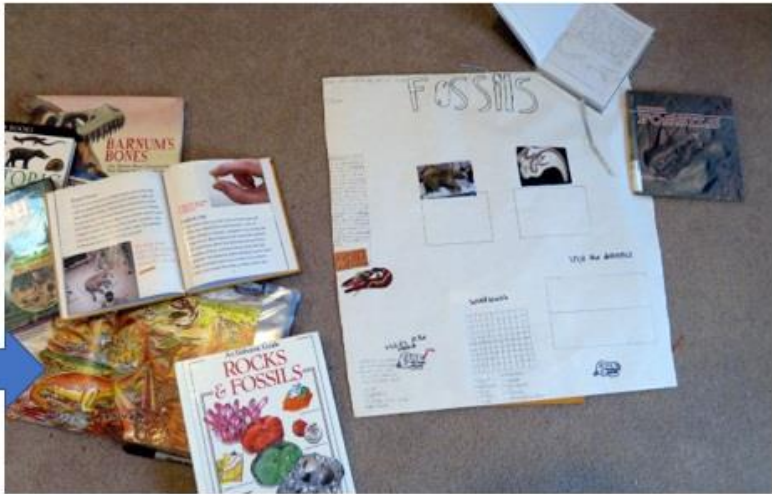
I would really like to cover (topic, subject, skill...) _____

Should we have classes in the homeschool room or living room? (Thoughts? It's not for voting)

Is there a subject that you feel we should stop doing?
Is there a subject/topic that we are spending too much time on?

When you ask yourself why you have to do something, you realize you have a choice in the matter... you realize you are in control of your own destiny.

Diving in deep on a topic that interests you...



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This semester we started off with a family discussion... a discussion that I hope will get to the heart of the kids' own motivations, self-determination and the path they'll/we'll be creating for this semester.

You guys know it, I am a planner. I am a curriculum creator... but when it comes to the day-to-day I am **not** the "BIG BOSS" ... I am more of a coach, facilitator, mentor, resource, guide in THEIR educational journey!!

I wanted to start off the semester with a series of discussions that would help them see how much control they have over their lives... over how they are now at the age that they are beginning to run their lives... that they have control over things that are molding their own futures. Let me tell you about what we did... and maybe you can take this and tweak it to have some deep, meaningful conversations with your own kids. :)

Looking ahead and visualizing a better future can give you inspiration and motivation to do mundane things.

Made by Liesl, homeschoolden.com

Why, Why, Why?

On the first day back, the kids filled out a questionnaire answering all kinds of "Why" questions. I didn't tell them any of the stuff above about motivation or internal drive or anything. I just handed them the sheet and asked the to fill it out. I asked them to really look for the reasons they do things... not just "because Mom says so." In fact, I pointed out, because you are older now there are a lot of things that you could choose not to do on this list even if I asked you.

I think I gave them about 15 minutes to fill in that first sheet. Here is the list of questions I had for them:

- Write down something you really don't want to do. Is it important? What if you just don't do it?
- Why brush your teeth twice a day?
- Why are you homeschooling?
- Why aren't you in public school?
- Why do you do math?

Then I asked the kids... **Is it useful to ask all these why questions?** That didn't get the conversation rolling very quickly, but I wanted them to know that conversation was about more than just the questions themselves. When there was that deadly silence... I continued... So why do you brush your teeth? They gave me the normal answers... and I pointed out that at this point brushing your teeth is more than just "because Mom or Dad says so, right?" You want or want to make sure you don't have cavities and want to avoid painful dental procedures, right? It's not just about following your parents anymore, it's about taking responsibility for your future.

We let the conversation wander over some of the other questions (and actually, the more the kids talked the more animated the discussion became). ... Eventually I pulled it back to MY theme... so what do these WHY questions show us? The kids were able to get very close to the answer I was looking for... **that these kinds of questions give us insight into why we do the things we do.** These reasons can give us **motivation** to continue with repetitive or boring tasks or things we're not sure we want to do.

Thinking about what we are doing gives us a reason for completing tasks... (our conversation moved to chores around the house and why these things need to get done...).

I again pointed out that now that they are preteens and teens, they have control over what they do. They are making the decision to complete tasks, work on projects and do schoolwork... or not! And, in fact, all of this gives us **MOTIVATION** for getting things done.

When you ask yourself why you are forcing yourself to do something you realize you have a choice in the matter... you realize you are in control of your own destiny. You realize you are making your own life much better and more productive.

Name: _____

Why, why, why??

Write down something you really don't want to do. Is it important? What if you just don't do it?

Why brush your teeth twice a day?

Why are you homeschooling?

Why aren't you in public school?

Why do you do math?

Is history important to learn? Why or why not?

Why are you saving money... or are you?

Why keep your room clean? (seriously... is it important to you? Why or why not?)

Why go to college? Why join the military?

Why help others? Why volunteer?

Why learn a language?

Why do you watch TV shows/YouTube/videos etc.?

Why play games?

Why work hard?

Our Routine: Control and Decision-Making

On the second day, I asked them "Why ask Why?" Of course DD said, "Why not?" After a chuckle, I brought it back around, "Seriously guys, why bother to ask ourselves why we do things?" They were pretty easily able to highlight the fact that thinking a little more deeply about what we are doing **helps us see why things are important** and can even **motivate** us to get things done.

We talked about taking out the compost (a task that my kids really dislike). I told them that the reason why I like doing it is a) because the plant matter doesn't go to the landfill and b) because eventually I get to see the nutrient-rich soil that I add to our vegetable garden. I really like the feeling that I am helping the soil. I feel a sense of reward seeing that cycle happen and it truly makes me happy. The kids raised their eyebrows... I told them maybe they don't have that Earth-hugging warm fuzzy feeling right now, but at the very least they've helped their Mom out, right? And that makes me really grateful for a family like ours.

Before we start on the other side (of the Why, Why, Why sheet), I want to talk a little bit about **control**. When people believe that they are in control, they are much more likely to work hard and push themselves. I mentioned the study of kids who were given some puzzles and challenges. After thirty minutes or so, the kids were then either told that they were really **smart** to have done so well at the puzzle challenges or were told that they **worked hard**. The next time the kids were given similar, but harder challenges the students that had been told that they were hard workers worked at the puzzles longer and showed more perseverance than those that had been told they were smart.

When people believe they are in control, they tend to work harder. The kids that had been told *they were hard-workers* had control. They were more confident and challenged themselves more.

"Today," I told the kids, "we're going to talk a little more practically about what we're doing - not just why we're doing things. You're also going to help me out by giving me some suggestions for lunch and dinner. :) This is your education and I want to know what your priorities are and what things we should change up."

Our Routine Name: _____

Choose a... _____ Therefore choose the time _____
You are going to be in order to get everything done? _____
You are going to be in order to make this happen? _____

Monday exercise: _____
Lunch: _____
Dinner: _____
Wednesday workout meal: _____
How much time to clean your room: _____ extra a day/week
Friday dinner: This is what I will do by the Friday: _____

How much time do you need for...
Math _____
Computer science _____
Music practice _____
Reading/Literature _____
This semester I really feel like we need to work on... _____

I would really like to cover (topic, subject, skill...) _____

Should we have Christmas in the basement room or living room? (Thoughtful! It's will be writing)

Is there a subject that you feel we should stop doing?
Is there a subject/topic that we are spending too much time on?

I gave them about 10 minutes to jot down their answers...

As you can imagine, our conversation meandered from our favorite meals (I scribbled madly and came up with a long list of things to make!)

We had some really good discussions about what we've been learning and I was able to really touch bases with the kids about the subjects/topics we're doing. For example, my son says he really wants to spend more time working on computer science

and said he wants to spend at least an hour or two a day on that. (This is subject that I am not teaching. My Hubby is teaching/overseeing that... so the kids work on assignments Hubby has given them. Also, LD and DD (my older two) have a computer class once a week.). My youngest said she really wants to dive into a unit on fossils and paleontology again. So, we spent time earlier this week mapping out what she would do. She wants to create a power-point presentation and a giant poster on what she learns.

One last thing to remember, people are more motivated to complete different chores and tasks when they are presented as **decisions** rather than **commands**.



Name: _____

Our Routine

Choose a...

Time to get up (in order to get everything done!): _____ Therefore choose the time you need to go to bed to make this happen: _____

Favorite Morning Exercise: _____

Favorite Lunch: _____

Favorite Dinner: _____

Wednesday crockpot meal: _____

How much time to clean your room... _____ mins a day/week

Friday chores: This is what I will do by this Friday:

How much time do you need for...

Math _____

Reading/Literature _____

This semester I really feel like we need to work on....

I would really like to cover (topic, subject, skill...)

Where should we work on things?

Is there a subject that you feel we should stop doing?

Is there a subject/topic that we are spending too much time on?

Mental Models

We create mental models of what we expect to see... we tell ourselves stories about what's going on as things happen. We daydream about our future. We think about the things we expect to happen.

What do you expect to happen when you get up each morning?

I set the timer for 4 minutes and had the kids write down what they do each morning (on a "normal" school day, not on the weekend.)

When the timer went off, I read them the story of a NICU nurse who walked by an infant being attended by another nurse. As she glanced at the baby, she became concerned. She noticed the baby's skin tone was mottled, the baby's tummy was slightly distended and the place where a pin-prick test had been done on the heel had a bit more blood than is normal. The other nurse was observing the baby's normal breathing, pulse rate, etc. wasn't concerned. The other nurse, though, quickly contacted a doctor and had the doctor prescribe antibiotics. The doctor ordered some labs to be done and it turns out that the baby was in the early stages of sepsis. If the nurse hadn't acted right away, likely the baby would have died.

What made the one nurse take in the breathing and pulse-rate and feel that things were normal and the other nurse to feel that something was wrong? She said she had a mental image of what she expected a normal infant to look like and something was just "off" with this baby.

We often create mental models of what we expect... and even what we hope to see. For the nurse, when this baby didn't fit her mental model she acted... and saved the baby's life!

We went to talk about how athletes will often "see" themselves making a goal, running a race faster than ever or sinking a shot in basketball.

PART2: I had the kids look at their writing... was it positive? Negative? Neutral? (write that on the line). I said, chances are your writing was positive or neutral, right? We don't normally envision a morning where we wake up grouchy or scream at our sibling in frustration, right? We often make mental models that create a positive future for ourselves). On the next line add in 2 or 3 positive things you'd like to add into your morning

PART 3: After they spent a minute writing their positive additions... I said... this is your secret weapon... a weapon that a lot of people don't realize they have. You can take something neutral like brushing your teeth and instead use that moment to envision yourself at the age of 99 with gleaming, pearly whites! **Looking ahead and visualizing a better future can give you inspiration and motivation to do mundane things.**

Our choices are meaningful!

You can control your destiny with the choices you make. ... a good grade is due to hard work... the ability to play an instrument is due to the rehearsals you do, the lessons you take, the time you put into practicing.

When we feel a sense of control, we are much more willing to play along. When you start asking yourself why... those small tasks become a part of a larger constellation of meaningful projects, goals and values. They prove that we are making meaningful choices.