



## The 'Why' in Learning Activities From the Child's Perspective

'Why?' as a motivational force: an igniter!

Giving children the right 'why wings'...

Some children are happy to accept: 'because I said so'; 'it will do you good'; 'it's for your future'; or 'because the government says so'. But as you and I know many children will not. Some children bring so many issues with them to the classroom, that these reasons just don't wash. Some children have few issues, and still, these reasons are just not enough to ignite their learning fires.

And that's where problems can be compounded: low or higher level disruption, laziness, poor output, low quality work, 'skim' (soon-to-be-forgotten) learning, boredom, frustration, time-wasting, under-achieving, bad test results.

I have found over the years - mostly through bitter experience - that children need more than adult reasons for learning. They need children's reasons.

When a child is truly motivated, they bring an energy to their learning. As long as you provide for their basic needs (shelter, warmth, food, water, rest bites, relaxation, encouragement and care), they will fly with the right 'why wings'. Those are the times when they love you! Those are the times when they do something extra at home without being asked and bring it in to show you the next day. Those are the times when they drag their parents in at home time to show them what they have been doing in school. Those are the times when parents say, "He/she never stops practising that song!" Those are the times when the children say at playtime, "Aw! Can I stay in and finish my work?"

Wouldn't it be wonderful if MOST of the time we gave children the right 'why wings'? Or even ALL of the time? What would happen to disruption levels, emotional wellbeing, long-term memory, test results, and most importantly, learning?

Why not sit down quietly alone in a room and think back to what it was like to be a child. Can you ever remember wanting to do something because the government said so? Why did you want to do things? Think back ... and don't stop thinking until you can remember what it felt like to be a child. What it was like to be motivated to do something? ... and Why?

Why - am doing this?



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Fundraiser for... (marketing/  
advertising/ticketing)

Performance for...(marketing/  
advertising/ticketing & box of-  
fice/stage managing/costuming/  
seating plan/make-up/lighting/  
sound)

Video for ...

Blog for ...

Fun!

Enjoyment

Having a laugh

Competition against self/others/  
the clock

Winning prizes/medals/honours

Earning points/treats/privileges

Satisfying needs: hunger/thirst/  
tiredness/ temperature e.g.

making refreshments or cleaning  
out the rabbit hutch

Exhibition for...

Display for...

Protest about

Campaign for/against...

Petition

Gathering support

Raising awareness

Solving problems

Building relationships: building  
bridges

Breaking down barriers

Presenting for...

Gaining qualifications

Protecting others

Finding peace

Expressing yourself

Understanding yourself

Understanding others

Showing off skills/learning

Inviting guests

Giving a tour

Gauging opinion

Representing others/a cause

Caring for...

To make someone's life easier

To make them feel better

Writing for a real audience -  
friend/relative/class/another  
class

Publishing a book for sale/an  
event

Celebrating a special event

Organising people for...

Teaching others - helping them  
to learn

Satisfying the need to know