

## **Starting the New Year on a Positive Note**

It's a new year, and according to tradition this is the time to set your intentions for the year ahead, decide what you want to change and set up positive new habits. For adults, many people choose to quit smoking, lose weight or manage their money better. What children want to change will depend on the child, their age and interests, but parents can help their kids start the new year on a positive note by helping children decide on their goals, encouraging positive thinking and participating in children's study time to help them achieve their goals.

## **Helping Children Set Achievable Goals**

As anyone who has tried to eliminate a loved, yet fattening food from their diet knows, it's hard to stick to a goal unless you really believe in it. For a parent who wants to help their child start the year on a positive note, it is important to sit down with your child and talk together about what they want to change. Being an active participant in goal setting means that the child is working towards something that is meaningful to them, and it's also a valuable tool that will serve them well throughout their life. If your child loves to play soccer, they might want to set a goal of achieving a certain number of points scored in the next month. For the child who struggles with math, a positive goal might be to raise their next test score by five points. Positive goals are well defined and challenging yet achievable. Try to avoid setting goals such as "Be nicer to my sister." A goal of "When I get frustrated with my sister I'm going to use words instead of hitting her" is more clearly defined, and easier to stick to.

## **Encourage Good Study Habits in the New Year**

All children can benefit from an improvement in their study habits. Kids who already do well in school will benefit by studying more efficiently, leaving more time for social and extra-curricular activities, and kids who are struggling can learn how to focus their energy and set time aside for homework every day. Parents can help encourage good study habits by giving kids the skills and routines they need to get their work done. Kids who are old enough to get homework assignments are old enough for day planners. Show them how to write down each assignment as it is given, and let them tick it off as it is completed. Parents can also help by making homework time a part of the daily routine. Kids need some downtime after a full day of school, but start homework time at a fixed time in the early evening every day. Turn off the TV, encourage a quiet atmosphere in the house and ask children to try to complete their assignments without help before stepping in with assistance. Taking quizzes from Qwizzy's World together during homework time is one way parents can participate positively in helping kids develop good study habits.

## **The Importance of Positive Thinking**

Positive thinking is key to achieving goals, and while some people are naturally more positive than others, positive thinking is a skill that can be learned. Parents can help their children learn to think positively by being a good example of positive thinking themselves, and helping their children think about their successes and failures in positive, constructive ways. Sometimes being a model of positive thinking seems harder than simply lecturing kids about it, but actions speak far louder than words, especially where kids are concerned. If you catch yourself speaking negatively about yourself in front of your kids, catch yourself and say something like, "wow, that was really negative. I'm feeling a bit discouraged about this right now but I'm going to keep trying." Likewise, if you hear your child speaking negatively about themselves, ask them why they think that is true. Acknowledge their thoughts, then ask them what it might be like if that negative thought wasn't true. Being able to visualize a positive outcome is crucial to success, and helps in maintaining positive thinking. Reading and practicing [The Work](#) of Byron Katie is a life-changing way of examining your thoughts that can help you implement more positive thinking in your life.

Helping kids make and keep new year's resolutions can help them get better grades in school and improve their study habits, but it also teaches them how to set and achieve their own goals. Being able to use positive thinking and goal setting are valuable skills that will serve children well throughout their lives, and setting up those positive habits early on means that kids won't have to unlearn years of bad habits later on. It's a new year, so go ahead and help your kids make a positive fresh start!

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