

the
Effort
Myth



Core Parenting Skills
WORKBOOK



AND

Giving the
Three Gifts of Motivation
WORKBOOK



FOSTER RESILIENT, MOTIVATED, & INDEPENDENT INDIVIDUALS



The Effort Myth

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Going Beyond the Effort Myth: A Message from Sherri Fisher

Because you've purchased *The Effort Myth: How to Give Your Child the Three Gifts of Motivation*, you deserve a thank you gift. I've created bonus materials for you to unwrap!

No one should have to suffer to be an effective learner. Often, children would try harder if they only knew how.

It can be easy to see lack of motivation as your child's own problem to fix. The truth is that your child depends on relationships with others, especially with their parents, to launch the behaviors that lead to independence.

Education need not be about creating barriers to learning. Learning is every person's birthright. Instead we can give every child The Three Gifts of Motivation: academic and emotional skills that lead to competence; structure that leads to effective habits for supporting quality choices, and tools for creating hopeful, purposeful self-direction.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sherri".



It's not how hard a person tries that leads to success; it's **how** they try harder that matters most.

– SHERRI FISHER



Contents

Getting Started: Take a Guided Forgiveness Walk	6
Part 1: Core Parenting Skills	9
1) Manage Life's Stormy Weather	10
2) Be Your Child's Ally	15
3) Ask Don't Tell.....	19
Part 2: Giving the Three Gifts of Motivation	23
The Three Gifts of Motivation.....	25
1) Competence	26
2) Choices	30
3) Self-Direction.....	36
About the Author.....	43



Getting Started: Take a Guided Forgiveness Walk

This exercise can be done in your imagination or while taking a real walk.

You will want to use it over and over.

Imagine that you are carrying a backpack along a path. It's perhaps the size of the one your child carries to school. In it are memories of every time someone didn't come through for you, appeared to intentionally hurt or thwart you, and didn't even apologize. There are memories of embarrassing times and bad decisions in there, too.

The backpack weighs quite a bit. Each remembered lack of regard for your feelings or needs is a fist-sized rock. Each memory of a bad decision reminds you of what could have been. You are now walking uphill, and the backpack is uncomfortable. Your face is tight and your shoulders are buzzing with pain. A big tree is up ahead. Great! You can take the backpack off for now and leave it behind the tree where no one will notice.

You can almost sprint now, you feel so much lighter. Before long you are at a breathtaking overlook. You realize it's a good thing that you left the backpack behind or you might have been too exhausted even to reach the top. On your way back down, you come upon the backpack and must decide to put it back on—or not. It was so heavy. What if you emptied it out, at least some?



Each rock represents a grudge you may be holding, maybe with a number of schools and teachers. Carrying a grudge can make it difficult to move ahead smoothly in a relationship of any kind. Until you begin to forgive, you may struggle to have the desire to trust, let alone the ability to become open to doing so.

You may feel resentful and very challenged to forgive. You might even unintentionally spread the resentment around—to whole categories of people like the one or ones who harmed you or your child.

Forgiveness is not automatic. It is something that you choose. It happens in small stages. You give up your anger and negative judgment about whoever hurt you. Yes, it was unjust or thoughtless. However, even if you can no longer trust them, you can still forgive and maintain your boundaries.

Forgiveness is not the same as pretending that a wrong is right. It is understandably very challenging since you may need to give up the sense that you have been wronged or cheated. You aren't erasing the memory. You are taking its power away.

Why do you forgive? Because the sense of injury is a heavy weight to bear. Why do you remember? Because there may be patterns from year to year that are worth recognizing and learning more about. Only through the accumulated experience of being your child's parent will you know how to advocate for what is needed. But the judgment and fault-finding? They sap your power which you should never knowingly give away.

Leave grudges behind. Let them go.



Wherever you are in your parenting journey, today you can make a difference. It is never too late and it is never too early to get started.

– **SHERRI FISHER**





PART 1

.....

Core Parenting Skills





1

Manage Life's Stormy Weather

Begin with the T-E-A Cycle

Every life has stormy weather in it sometimes. This is a reminder that you can manage the feelings that can turn into stormy weather by adjusting thought stories to ones that are also true and that can help the emotion storm to pass.

Resilient thinking is an ability to adjust to perceived crisis, challenge, and change. You do not need an emotion storm of natural disaster proportions to use it. Resilient thinking gives you the gift of time while you:

1. Notice thought stories that fuel the emotion storm. Know that other people could reasonably disagree with your point of view.
2. Explore other also-true thoughts that calm the storm. Know that changing a thought gives you the power to change your actions.
3. Use the T-E-A Cycle worksheets below to record your thinking.
4. Engage your selective attention. Switch your focus to what is also true.
5. Using the worksheet, re-tell your story, substituting also-true thoughts for ones that keep you stuck in emotions like anger, fear, sadness, shame, guilt, or disgust.
6. Take new, more intentional action.



STORMY WEATHER: Your Thought Story



Example Problem (Facts only)

My child does not complete their homework.

Thought about it: They waste a lot of time just getting started.

Emotion you feel about it: Anger/frustration

Action you may want to take: Yell at them to try harder and just do it.

Background Noise?

You are angry that your child seems to be wasting time. Wastefulness makes you feel angry.



STORMY WEATHER: Your Thought Story Re-tell

THOUGHT
What's also true?
Write below:

Not fair
What if?
Gone forever
Embarrassing
My Fault
Disgusting

EMOTION
How you feel now:

ACTION
Intentional choice:

THOUGHT
New Story:

Listen. Slow it down. Also true? New plan!

My child has not completed their homework.

Thought about it: They have not gotten started yet.

Emotion you feel about it: Curiosity

Action you may want to take: Ask questions.

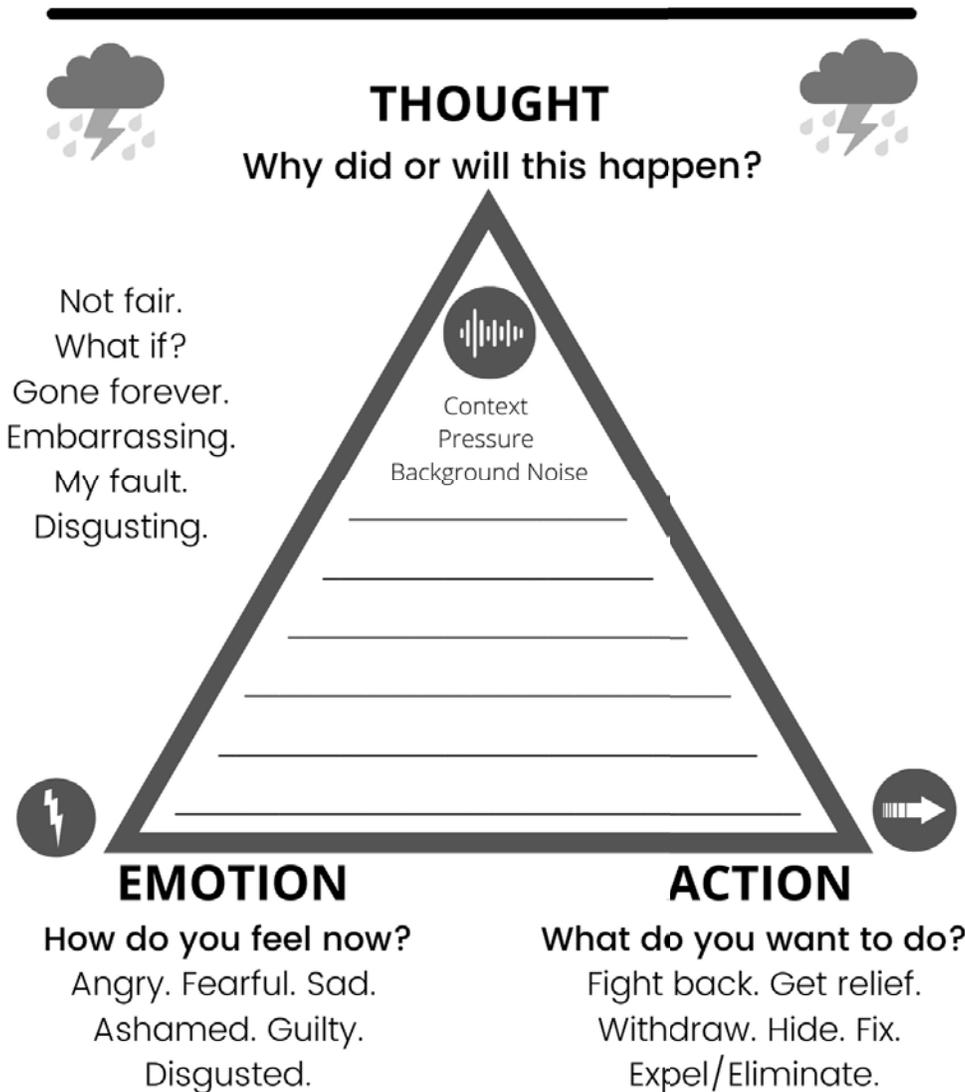
Background Noise?

You are curious about what can help. Curiosity helps you to suspend judgment and want to know more.



Here is a blank T-E-A chart for you to try:

STORMY WEATHER: Your Thought Story



Listen. Slow it down. Also true? Re-tell!



Remember to Take Stock of Resilience Factors

Use this form to remind yourself of your child's resilience factors. Check off the items that are solidly present in your child's life. List or take notes about how the factors show up. Include the date. Revisit this form periodically to keep track of resilience factors that are developing and note where you see positive impacts.

Record of Your Child's Resilience Factors

Protective (External) Factors	Responsive (Internal) Factors
<input type="checkbox"/> Close relationships with caring adults List: _____	<input type="checkbox"/> Emotional self-awareness (Listen.) Notes: _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Effective caregivers and family members List: _____	<input type="checkbox"/> Self-regulation (Slow it down.) Notes: _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Close friends and confidants List: _____	<input type="checkbox"/> Flexible thinking skills (What else?) Notes: _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Safe, nurturing environments Notes: _____	<input type="checkbox"/> Problem-solving and planning skills Notes: _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Effective educational systems Notes: _____	<input type="checkbox"/> Mastery attitude (Try again.) Notes: _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Health and emotional care Notes: _____	<input type="checkbox"/> General Intelligence Notes: _____



2

Be Your Child's Ally

Proactively Prepare for School Meetings

Prepare mentally and practically for meetings with teachers and administrators as you discover together how best to serve your child.

Document Symptoms You Observe

You might select some of the ones listed below or come up with your own list. Then fill in the chart that follows with details about when the symptom shows up and when you first started seeing it.

- Reading is inaccurate
- Studies and seems to know the content but does poorly on tests
- Makes small errors on math
- Procrastinates on _____
- Seems exhausted, moody and irritable, especially before and after the school day
- Has trouble getting started on _____
- Has trouble following multistep directions
- Frustrates easily
- Worries instead of working



- Catastrophizes/melts down
- Will choose failing rather than accept help from you or others
- Blames others for what seem like their own errors
- Over talks/can't stop talking about the same thing
- Friendship struggles can dominate thinking energy needed for work
- Has hard time expressing what they need or want
- Defiant: Knows rules but breaks them
- Lies, hides, sneaks to game/text/be on chat apps/watch inappropriate content
- Has physical symptoms of distress such as headache, stomach/gastrointestinal
- Avoids tasks involving handwriting, spelling, typing



Record Your Child's Symptoms

As you continue to prepare for meetings with teachers and administrators, think back about the interventions that have already been tried in school. How well did they seem to work? You could start by checking off the items in the list below. Feel free to add your own descriptions of what has been tried.

Symptoms I observe...	Especially when...	A problem since...
What has been tried?	Successful!	Get more of this by...



Plan Your Communication Approach

Use the form below to plan your approach for a parent-teacher meeting. Use the first column to gather what first comes to mind. If it sounds constructive, copy it into the middle column. If not, rewrite it to leave out anything that would make a teacher defensive. Use the third column during or after the meeting to capture the teacher's response. You can save these forms to create a record of the meeting for future reference.

Initial thoughts (May be what not to say)	Refined message to use in the meeting	Teacher response
I notice...	I notice ...	
I feel...	I feel ...	
I want...	I want ...	
Will you...	Will you ... I can...to help.	
[closure] ...It shouldn't have to be this hard...	I am looking forward to ...	



3

Ask Don't Tell

Now that you've explored the core basic parenting skills for building resilience, enhance your coaching style.

Get Started: Before you can become a coach for your own child, be sure that you are ready to do the following:

- Listen to them and take the time to hear more, without judgment or direction
- Collect more information about the context of your child's requests or challenges before reacting unilaterally.
- Believe in their ability to manage disappointments, discover their own strengths to resolve conflicts, and move ahead with resilience.



Create Soft Landings

After first turning down your own stormy background noise with the T-E-A Cycle, here is what you can do to create a soft landing for your child:

Teach your child that with your help (and eventually without it) they can:

- Sort through their own feelings (excitement, worry, sadness, embarrassment ...)
- Understand the complexity of decisions and that not all wishes are possible
- Choose solutions from available options, even when they are disappointing

Practice soft landings every day, not just when there are problems. Revisit Chapter 4 in *The Effort Myth* for more about Soft Landings.

Use a Coaching Approach

For all children, but especially those with learning challenges, school responsibilities can be overwhelming. That's why your child may need a coach to deal with assignments that require more learning self-help, such as accessing online assignments and resources or managing complex tasks. How can you be that person? By learning how to ask, not tell.

Here are some of the skills you will want to draw upon to be an effective coach for your child when they are facing something that they feel is particularly difficult:



- Model what it means to be a resilient learner. Teach your child to tame judgment of themselves and others. Let them see you addressing something that you do not already know how to do. Breathe: Slow it down. Listen before you solve. Figure out the next step. Reach out for help with a specific ask.
- Ask yourself whether they have the skills that the current challenge requires. Be sure to review essential skills in Chapters 6 and 7 of *The Effort Myth*. Assume that your child would be doing the work if they had the necessary skills and knew how to apply them.
- Ask what is also true. Listen to your background noise. Slow the process down. Calm the emotion storms for both of you. Put aside grudges. Wonder what your child needs or wishes.
- Look for barriers to success. Review Chapters 8 and 9 of *The Effort Myth* where we explore what executive functions your child needs and how to help build them. You may need to add structure so your child can accomplish tasks, learn content, and improve skills.
- Observe your child's experience of this struggle. Uncover ways they are already using strengths and help them think of new ways to use the capabilities they already have. It is more motivating in the short term and more powerful in the long run than continually trying to fix what is wrong with them. Return to Chapter 10 for more about recognizing strengths in action.



Ask Coaching Questions

Purpose	Questions
Open the discussion and ask student permission	<p>What was your day like? That sounds _____ (Affirm/Do not fix).</p> <p>What is your work like for today?</p> <p>How can I help?</p> <p>Where would you like to start?</p>
Discover student objectives	<p>What do you want to accomplish?</p> <p>Where are the written directions?</p> <p>What do you think is necessary to get this work done?</p> <p>Where are the materials you need?</p>
Uncover student strengths	<p>What is one thing you could do?</p> <p>How is this like an earlier assignment?</p> <p>What do you think has worked so far? (Make note, but make no judgment.)</p>
Inquire about needs	<p>What is something you haven't tried yet?</p> <p>Who else might have the information?</p> <p>Who are the people that you can rely on?</p> <p>Who has made you feel understood, supported, or encouraged?</p> <p>What can you do until they get back in touch?</p>
Construct time-wise plan	<p>What is your time estimate for this work?</p> <p>What is the first thing you could do to make that happen?</p> <p>What is the best place to begin?</p>
Take measurable skilled action	<p>What skills helped the most on tasks like this in the past?</p> <p>What skills are needed?</p> <p>How will you know you are on the right track?</p> <p>How did you advocate for yourself?</p>
Reflect: Evaluate success	<p>What went well?</p> <p>What have you learned?</p> <p>What would you do the same way another time?</p> <p>What might you do differently? Why?</p>

PART 2

Giving the
Three Gifts of Motivation





Improvement,
not perfection, is the goal
of living a good life.

– **SHERRI FISHER**





The Three Gifts of Motivation

In this workbook, you'll find exercises with related worksheets and checklists to help you give the Three Gifts of Motivation: Competence, Choices, and Self-direction. This section is designed to provide practical tools as you raise strong and independent individuals.



COMPETENCE

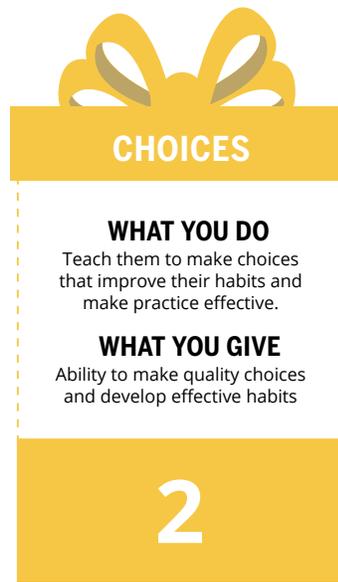
WHAT YOU DO
Build often overlooked discrete skills and strengths to fill student gaps.

WHAT YOU GIVE
Stronger academic and emotional skills

1

The First Gift

When you give the gift of Competence, you make sure that your child has the solid basic skills for achieving results that they can care about.



CHOICES

WHAT YOU DO
Teach them to make choices that improve their habits and make practice effective.

WHAT YOU GIVE
Ability to make quality choices and develop effective habits

2

The Second Gift

When you give the gift of Choices, you provide ways to offer some learning autonomy for your child so that results of their work are because of things they can choose and change.



SELF-DIRECTION

WHAT YOU DO
Help them envision and plan for themselves beyond formal schooling.

WHAT YOU GIVE
Tools for creating a hopeful and purposeful future

3

The Third Gift

When you give the gift of Self-direction, your child can experience pride and accomplishment for its own sake, using the strengths, relationships, and self-beliefs that ready them for successful transition to college or directly to the world of work.



The First Gift of Motivation: COMPETENCE

When you give the gift of Competence, you make sure that your child has the solid basic skills for achieving results that they can care about.

COMPETENCE

WHAT YOU DO
Build often overlooked discrete skills and strengths to fill student gaps.

WHAT YOU GIVE
Stronger academic and emotional skills

1

Skills Checklist

SKILL	MY CHILD CAN:
Reading	<input type="checkbox"/> Identify real words <input type="checkbox"/> Decode unknown words <input type="checkbox"/> Comprehend main ideas and details <input type="checkbox"/> Enjoy reading when using these skills
Writing	<input type="checkbox"/> Generate ideas to write about <input type="checkbox"/> Communicate with language <input type="checkbox"/> Use conventions of grammar and organization <input type="checkbox"/> Use a writing implement, keyboard or adaptive strategy
Arithmetic	<input type="checkbox"/> Retrieve math facts for adding, subtracting, multiplying, and dividing
Reasoning	<input type="checkbox"/> Understand what's being presented in language or non-verbal content <input type="checkbox"/> Apply skills for solving problems, including in math and science, to get an answer that makes sense
Selective Attention	<input type="checkbox"/> Direct attention and focusing on what is important in any task <input type="checkbox"/> Know where to apply the skills they do have
Following Directions	<input type="checkbox"/> Be able to break down a large task into smaller steps <input type="checkbox"/> Apply Do. What. How. When? (See Chapter 8)
Fluency	<input type="checkbox"/> Be able to use needed skills with automaticity and ease
Executive Functions	<input type="checkbox"/> Be able to launch and manage the skills of mental and emotional self-control (These are discussed in detail in Chapter 8.)



Writing Process Checklist

STEP	HOW TO DO IT
Prewrite	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Determine the purpose. <input type="checkbox"/> Decide who it is for. <input type="checkbox"/> Generate ideas. <input type="checkbox"/> Sort and label categories of ideas. <input type="checkbox"/> Choose a pattern such as compare/contrast, explaining a process, or giving examples. <input type="checkbox"/> Make a basic organizational plan using a step-wise graphic organizer to collect ideas.
Write	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Use your plan to compose sentences. <input type="checkbox"/> Fluently retrieve vocabulary to get your ideas across. <input type="checkbox"/> Create paragraphs that stick to one idea. <input type="checkbox"/> Support a point of view with evidence. <input type="checkbox"/> Use reasonable spelling, standard grammar, and mechanics.
Revise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Consider the piece from the point of view of the intended reader. <input type="checkbox"/> Ask a peer for input at this stage. <input type="checkbox"/> Make changes in organization and word choice. <input type="checkbox"/> Add details. <input type="checkbox"/> Read aloud to hear the language. <input type="checkbox"/> Use the “Comments” function in your word processor to keep track of your thinking. Use an electronic thesaurus for word variety.
Edit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Identify and correctly fix mechanical errors so that every sentence can stand alone. <input type="checkbox"/> Read whole sentences from the end to the beginning in order to focus on one sentence at a time. <input type="checkbox"/> Use the spelling and grammar checker, but know that it is not perfect. <input type="checkbox"/> Ask an expert, not a peer, to help with mechanics at this stage. <input type="checkbox"/> Consult the rubric if you have been given one.
Publish	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Submit the final copy for whatever publication purpose you need. <input type="checkbox"/> Evaluate your writing experience. <input type="checkbox"/> Did you stay on track throughout the writing process?



Writing Challenge Checklist

WRITING CHALLENGE	STRATEGY
Getting started/Deciding what to write about	Offer two or three choices that fit the assignment.
Going off-topic while writing	Suggest writing the main idea at the top of the page and highlighting it.
Running out of ideas for a topic	Suggest generating a list of ideas in advance rather than while writing.
Writing about random rather than connected ideas	Suggest organizing the list of ideas into categories before writing and/or color-coding different categories of ideas.
Starting sentences in similar ways	Give transition words (First, Then, Next, After that, Finally...) or "how" adverbs (Suddenly, Usually, Unexpectedly, Quickly, Carefully, Secretly...) to use as sentence starters.
Not answering the prompt or missing some implied directions	Suggest breaking down an assignment into sequential steps and numbering them.
Having many mechanical errors	Suggest: Double-spacing all writing. Errors are easier to spot that way. Using detective skills while proofreading. Putting a dot in the left margin for each error in a line. Four errors? Put four dots. None?



Accommodations to Try

TARGET AREA	ADJUSTMENT
Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Seat: Near place of primary instruction; with appropriate peers; away from distractions• Classroom: Designed with consistency and routine in mind• Resources: Color-coded and clearly labeled resources in classroom• Offer movement breaks
Instruction/Presentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Preview new concepts and connect explicitly to previous material• Provide visual and verbal information simultaneously• Break down complex directions• Provide access to audiobooks and other multimedia
Assignments/ Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Allow use of a calculator or reference sheet• Give extended time and teach how to use it• Speech-to-text/dictation allowed for written work• Provide graphic organizers across all subjects• Connect examples of completed work to rubrics



The Second Gift of Motivation: CHOICES

When you give the gift of Choices, you provide ways to offer some learning autonomy for your child so that results of their work are because of things they can choose and change.

CHOICES

WHAT YOU DO
Teach them to make choices that improve their habits and make practice effective.

WHAT YOU GIVE
Ability to make quality choices and develop effective habits

2

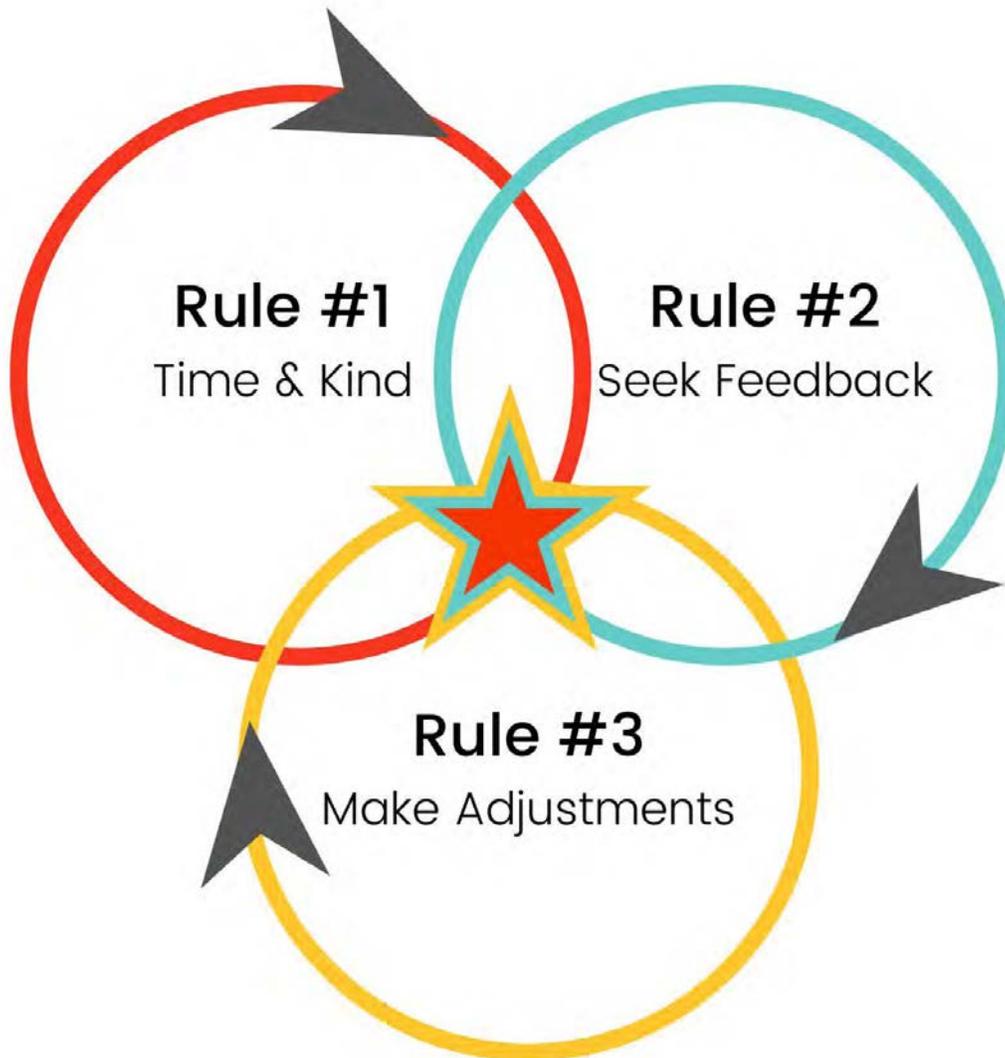
Executive Functions: STOP-SWITCH-START

Keyword and Purpose	What you do when it is going well
<p>STOP present behavior</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create physical and emotional space for doing something else • Control impulses to continue the previous activity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make attention available • Put aside worrying, playing, socializing, eating, other work, or resisting
<p>SWITCH to new activity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Select next step, resource, skill, or activity • Can be very effortful when it is not happening smoothly • Harder with unfamiliar skills, resources, activities, or tasks • Staying on one task can involve a lot of switches 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Switch attention smoothly from step to step, resource to resource, and task to task • Do it in the background with little effort • Do it without conscious management • Resist getting stuck • Note: Math, reading comprehension, and written language rely heavily on switching skills
<p>START an activity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Figure out at least one clear action step that you do not resist • Begin work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work backwards from outcome to figure out what comes first • For single-step tasks: Just get started • For multi-step tasks: Manage anxiety, anger, sadness that can lead to procrastination



Three Rules for Adulting

The Three Rules for Adulting are an ongoing cycle.





Students can make observations and choices about their own goal-directed work:

Rule	Ask myself	Do
Rule #1: Assign time and kind of work to do	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the goal? • What steps are needed to accomplish it? • When will I do it? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Put answers into plan. • Stop-Switch-Start. • Do the work. • Self-monitor, complete, save. • Turn it in.
Rule #2: Seek feedback	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What techniques went well? • Besides grades, what is good about this? • What specific efforts made it happen? • How can I get a result that is at least that good next time? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Record measured performance and what behaviors got me this result. • Take note of even my small wins.
Rule #3: Make adjustments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What did I learn from feedback? • How can I celebrate small wins? • What changes need to be made? • What help do I need? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reassign myself time and kind, making tweaks based on feedback. • Make changes. • Manage background noise. • Reduce number of choices. • Stop-Switch-Start again.



Parents can ask themselves questions about their child's use of the Three Rules for Adulting:

TIME AND KIND

- How will they design their schedule around goals of any size?
- What kind of practice will be necessary? When?
- Are new skills part of this goal?
- Do they have the skills or need to learn some of them?

SEEK FEEDBACK

- How do they want to receive feedback: From a stopwatch? A personal critique? A video?
- Is feedback in a form that they can use so they can make needed changes?
- What is the most effective measure of progress for them?
- Will it motivate rather than defeat them?

MAKE ADJUSTMENTS

- How will they celebrate small wins?
- How will they make changes?
- Will they need help to choose these next steps?
- Who will be the best at guiding them?



Three Rules Calendar

An actively created calendar/planner can reduce the amount of executive function power required for work. This frees up brain power for more learning, the true goal of education. On the larger scale of planning, learning to envision their lives beyond what other people plan for them today is as fundamental to student success as knowing how to read, write, and solve problems. The examples in the graphic can be applied to any calendar, whether hardcopy or virtual. For more information, see Chapter 9 in *The Effort Myth*.

"Three Rules for Adulting" Planner						
What's going on in school →	½ Day-YAY					
Week of... 3/24-3/30	Monday 3/24	Tuesday 3/25	Wednesday 3/26	Thursday 3/27	Friday 3/28	
English/Language Arts						Saturday 3/29 Sunday 3/30
Math						
Science						Feedback Notes Color corner for future assignments due  <p>Work Backwards: What is the goal? What steps are needed to accomplish it?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Assign time and day and the kind of work needed. Seek Feedback: Record performance and what got you there: in Notes and in WWW. Make Adjustments. -Start sooner. -Do. What. How. When? with directions. -Break into parts. -Ask for help. -What else?
Social Studies						
Foreign Language						
Art/Music/Specials A.W.E. (And What Else?)						
LIFE After School Activities						
WWW: 1. What went well? 2. What was good about it? 3. How can I get more?	1. 2. 3.	1. 2. 3.	1. 2. 3.	1. 2. 3.	1. 2. 3.	1. 2. 3.



An actively created calendar/planner can reduce the amount of executive function power required for work. This frees up brain power for more learning, the true goal of education.

– SHERRI FISHER





The Third Gift of Motivation: SELF-DIRECTION

When you give the gift of Self-direction, your child can experience pride and accomplishment for its own sake, using the strengths, relationships, and self-beliefs that ready them for successful transition to college or directly to the world of work.



Help Students Develop Strengths by Spotting Their Strengths Aloud

Whether you are a parent or a student, knowing there are areas where a student seems to lack needed strengths can be a painful burden. Your child needs to be aware of their own strengths and choose to use them in ways that work for them in different contexts.

Here are actions you can take to spot and build strengths at home, along with example statements you might make:

1. Help your child see their strengths by offering prompt, positive, and incremental feedback.

Try: "I love the way you _____. (persevered, asked good questions, looked up words you did not know, created different approaches, were brave, asked for help, told the truth...)"



2. Help your child reflect on the way their strengths work for them, discussing both what worked and what might need adjustment.

Try: “_____ looks like it went well. What is good about _____? How could you do this another time? What would/can you adjust?”

3. Discuss together barriers that can be tweaked by using strengths.

Try: “Do you have everything you need to get started? If _____ happens, then you can use _____ strategy or tools.”

4. Help your child understand the ways that their strengths show up outside of school.

Try: “I see your _____ (perseverance, consideration for others, bravery, honesty) on the sports field.”



Use Strengths to Get the Job Done: The Producer's Checklist

You may wonder how many steps are involved for your child to (literally) get to their work. Here is a printable checklist of possible steps they may need. Add steps as needed.

- Remember login and password.
- Log into the school's portal.
- Check the assignments dashboard to see what's new.
- Make notes (in some way – mental?) of tasks.
- Go to individual course tabs to find assignments, resources, and links.
- Discover what is due soonest and potentially record that in a planner (digital or paper).
- Use a variety of apps and websites to complete a single assignment.
- Research and be able to tell what is salient without a teacher or textbook telling them.
- Self-teach with video.
- Make a personalized file management system.
- Set up new files and save them to the right folders.
- Make a work plan for the day, week, and future.
- Stay on track while doing individual assignments.
- Use self-regulation and self-help behaviors.



- Complete work online, including responding in a group chat.
- Contact group members without becoming distracted by non-work chatter.
- Submit work when it is completed.
- Check a separate portal for graded work if a teacher uses such a system.
- Keep a running learner's log of material since just doing assignments is not enough.
- Know what information to retain.
- Become increasingly aware of how their own learning process works.



Learning to envision their lives beyond what other people plan for them today is as fundamental to student success as knowing how to read, write, and solve problems.

– SHERRI FISHER





Use the 5-10-50 Approach for Making Hard Decisions

When adolescents have to make a hard decision that may have big impacts on their future stories, I find it helps for them to use what I call 5-10-50 Thinking to gain perspective. That means getting them to imagine the impacts of a decision at several future times to understand what it will be like to manage through a range of impacts that play out over time. For more on this review Chapter 11 in *The Effort Myth*.

Statement of the problem:	Imagine Possibilities Over Time
What will happen if I make this decision? (Impact in days)	5 days: 10 days: 50 days:
What will happen if I make this decision? (Impact in weeks)	5 weeks: 10 weeks: 50 weeks:
What will happen if I make this decision? (Impact in years)	5 years: 10 years: 50 years:
Decision:	



Supporting Self-Direction Away from Home: Roommate Checklist

One of the most important benefits of the gift of self-direction happens once your child is living away from home. In an atmosphere of newly limitless possibilities, the dorm room or apartment is an important place for creating a friend ally of the stranger sharing their space.

To navigate the roommate relationship, young adults need to make decisions for themselves about how to get their needs met. They might call or text you to get answers, but realistically, a parent's most effective help may happen by asking questions. Remind yourself, Ask, don't tell. Independently managing the roommate relationship can build self-awareness, boundary setting, and negotiation skills, as well as true friendship.

Roommates need to discover together answers to some of life's biggest questions, such as:

- Can I enter this room at any time, or will it sometimes be off-limits?
- Will I be faced with using earplugs to sleep because my roommate doesn't like to use headphones when they play their guitar?
- Will my underage roommate use illegal drugs or drink alcohol?
- Where will overnight guests sleep? Whose shampoo will they use in the morning? How long can they stay?
- What if my roommate's significant other moves in part way through the semester?
- Who will be responsible for cleaning what, and how often will this happen?
- Will it be ok to borrow and share food and personal belongings?
- How will we compensate or pay when things are lost or broken?
- How will differences be settled? Commit to working it out? Make a contract? Visit residential life staff? Move out?



About the Author



Sherri Fisher has dedicated decades to challenging the Effort Myth, both in schools and private practice. She believes that no one should have to suffer to be able to learn. Parents who work with Sherri in their youth return with their own children. Her client relationships don't just span grades; they span generations.

As a learning specialist and executive coach for students and their parents, Sherri has pioneered research-based tools that build skilled resilience, motivation, and self-direction. As a schools consultant she has guided educators and administrators to nurture the flexibility, strengths, and relationships that help improve academic and life outcomes.

Sherri is the Director of Learn & Flourish, an education coaching and consulting firm with clients on five continents. She earned her Master's degree in Applied Positive Psychology from the University of Pennsylvania where she studied with the founders of the field. Sherri lives in New England where she raised her children, her gardens, and her big pack of friendly dogs.



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Sherri Fisher

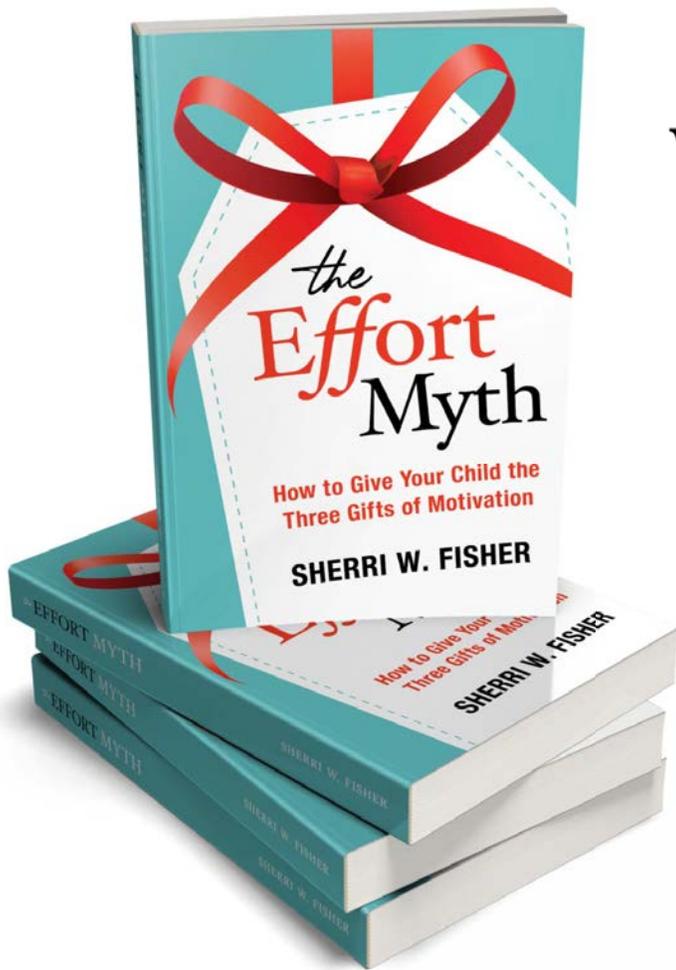
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TheEffortMyth.com

Wishing your child would just try harder?

Yes, effort is *necessary*.
However, trying harder is not sufficient by itself, and it may make a student's problems even worse.

That's because it's not how hard you try that leads to success. It's how you try hard that matters most.



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