

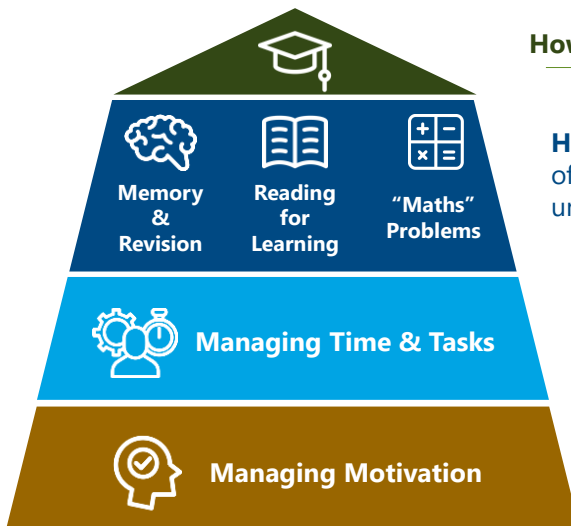


How To Ace Senior School

*Strategies For Success In
Year 7 And Beyond:
A Parents' Guide*



William
Wadsworth
RGS Y7, Oct 2021



How To Ace Senior School: Strategies For Success

How To Study Effectively: the psychology of memory, and how to learn, read and understand things for yourself

How To Get Things Done: staying organised and the art of productivity

How To Get (And Stay) Engaged: the science of drive & motivation

Every family is different: some
guiding principles to empower you
 to support your child as is **right for**
them – and for you!

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Research 

Workshops 

1:1 Coaching 

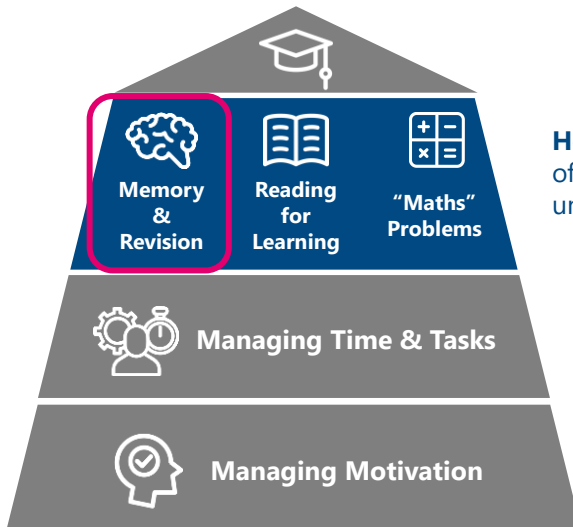
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Ace your exams by studying **smarter not harder**

  **Podcast**  **Blog**  **Book** 

1,000,000
Students
reached / year

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How To Study Effectively: the psychology of memory, and how to learn, read and understand things for yourself

"Just" memory?



Semantic memory: facts and information

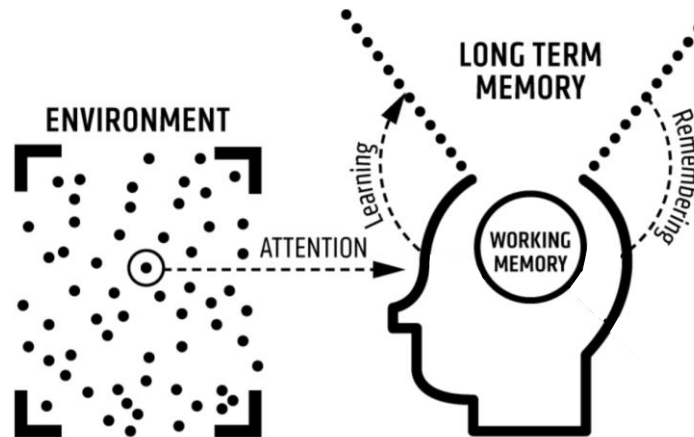
Episodic & autobiographical memory: your life, experiences with friends, your preferences

Procedural memory: "muscle memory" and physical skills

Imagination!



How does memory work: according to psychologists



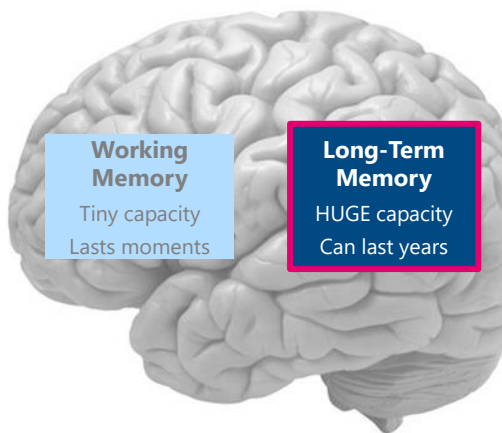
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Your long term memory is pretty incredible...



258 digits....!!

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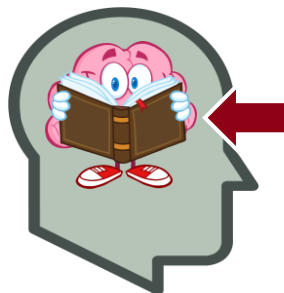


An important skill for Senior School success
is having **efficient ways to get
information to stick** in long-term memory

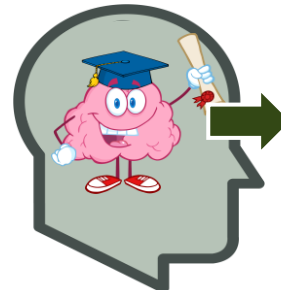
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Two options when learning: "long way" vs "smart way"

"Long way" techniques



"Smart way" techniques



Retrieval practice: testing yourself

“Long” vs “smart” way: weighing the evidence

Dunlosky et al 2013: evidence from a comprehensive review of 400+ separate scientific studies

Retrieval practice	●
Spaced learning	●
Interleaving: jumbling topics up	●
Asking questions to explore the topic	●
Explaining it to oneself	●
Summarising / making notes	●
Highlighting or underlining	●
Imagery use or keyword mnemonic	●
Re-reading	●

●	Highly effective
●	Moderately effective
●	Low effectiveness



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Pair testing: how to help your child with their retrieval practice

Question
number



Did they get the
answer right?



The “tester” should:

1. **Give feedback** to help you learn from your mistakes
2. **Revisit questions you got wrong** more than once

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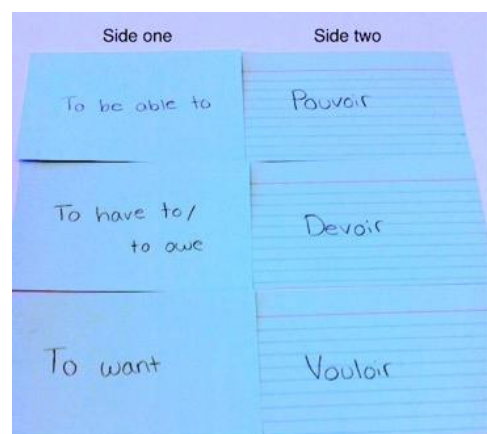
Don't have a partner to test you?
Test yourself with flashcards!

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The best flashcards are:

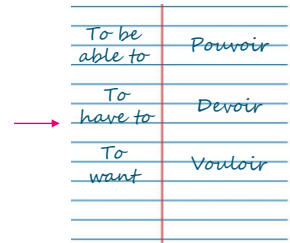
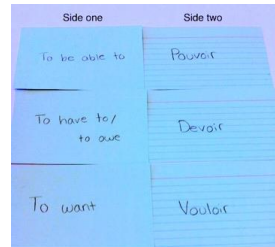
- **Two-sided:** clear question on the front, clear answer on the back
- **Simple:** less is more... break info down into lots of cards
- **Made quickly:** don't waste time making them pretty – make them fast, and get into TESTING YOURSELF with them 😊

Test yourself by looking at one side, and trying to remember the answer on the back!



Other good ways to do retrieval practice...

- “Digital flashcards” – Quizlet, Anki
- Q&A Ultranotes (pictured)
- Practice questions / past papers
- Mindmaps / spider diagrams / “brain dumps” – i.e. “writing stuff on paper from memory”



“Good revision technique” litmus test: **does it involve remembering anything?**

For best long-term memory results, test yourself repeatedly, on different days, with time delays in between



Like training a muscle, each time **you stretch your memory by trying to remember something**, your memory grows **stronger and lasts longer**



“So, how was your day?”
“What did you learn today?”

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“What did you learn today” – a question that’s often hard to answer, or boring to answer, or both...! Consider alternatives:

Make it easier to answer: break it down...

What subjects have you had today?

- Or even, “this afternoon”
- Or even, “just now” – i.e. last thing

What have you been talking about in [subject] recently?

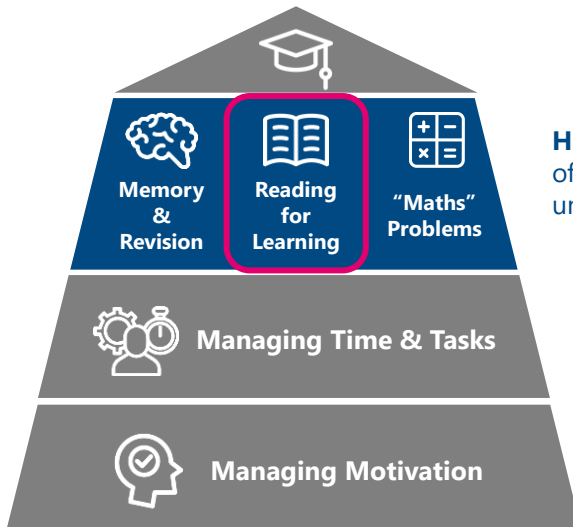
What’s the **most important thing** to know about [topic]?

Make it more fun to answer

Teach me something about [topic]?

What’s the **coolest thing about** [topic]? – *if they’re into it!*





How To Study Effectively: the psychology of memory, and how to learn, read and understand things for yourself

Reading for learning: 4 steps...

Sea otters are a type of otter that dwell in the North Pacific.

They are the largest of the mustelids, a group of mammals that also includes freshwater otters, weasels, and badgers.

Sea Otters	
Where live?	North Pacific
What group are they from?	Mustelids
Size vs other mustelids	Largest of the mustelids
Examples of mustelids (4)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sea otters • Freshwater otters • Weasels • Badgers



1. Read and highlight / underline

2. Make flashcards

3. Test yourself with the flashcards

4. Space your testing over different days

You might not always do all of these 4 steps, but the more you do, the better you'll remember what you've read...

1. Read and highlight / underline

2. Make flashcards

3. Test yourself with the flashcards

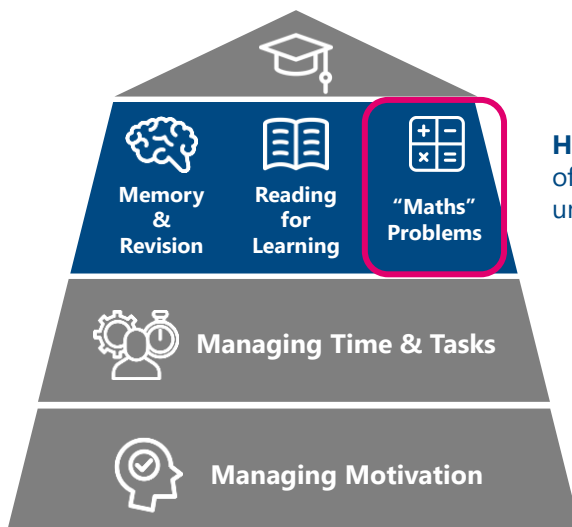
4. Space your testing over different days

If possible...

e.g. when reading non-fiction books

Do Steps 2-3 when there's a bit more at stake e.g. for a vocab test tomorrow

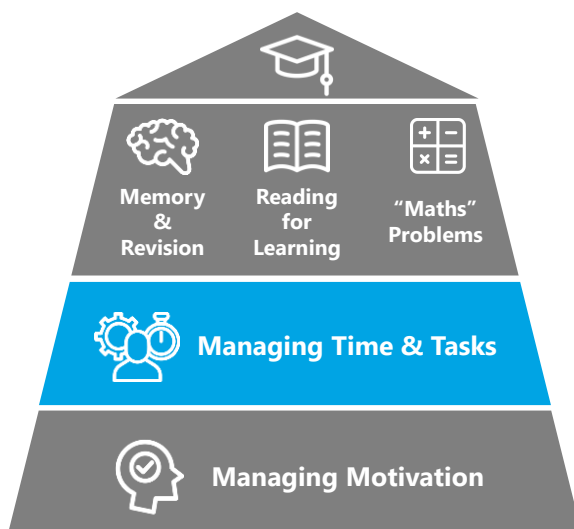
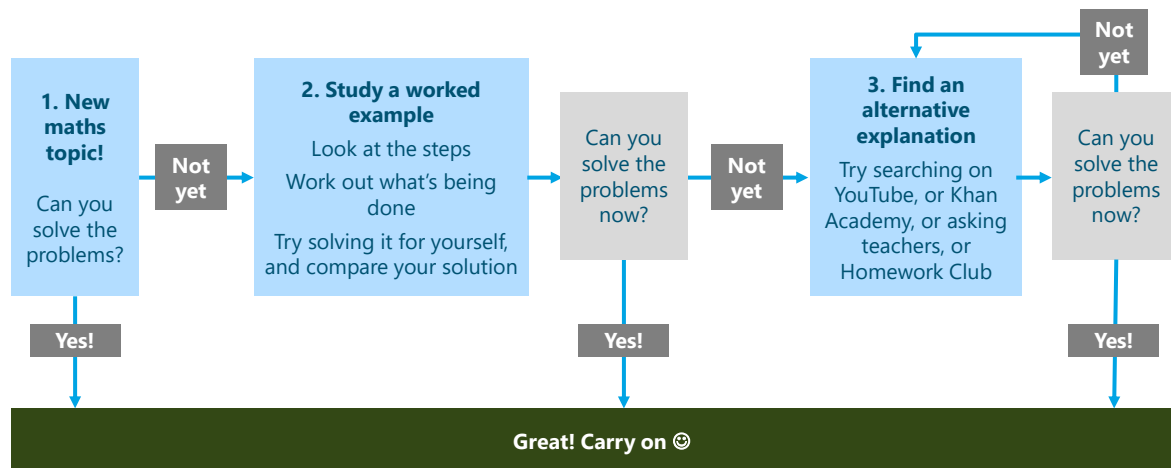
Be sure to do all four steps when you really want to know the material
e.g. for a major topic test or year-end exam



How To Study Effectively: the psychology of memory, and how to learn, read and understand things for yourself



What about maths problems? – persevere, trust the process!



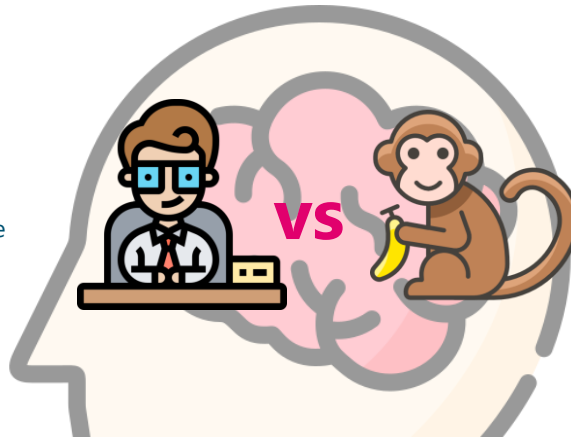
How To Get Things Done: staying organised and the art of productivity

Winning control of your life: a crucial step towards making a big success of yourself – not just at school but in life in general!

Inner C.E.O.

"Central Executive" Organiser

- Plans ahead
- Likes to get things done
- Future / goal focus
- High-achiever, successful, happy



Playtime Monkey

- Procrastinates
- Likes non-stop playtime
- Instant gratification
- Under-achiever, disappointed / frustrated

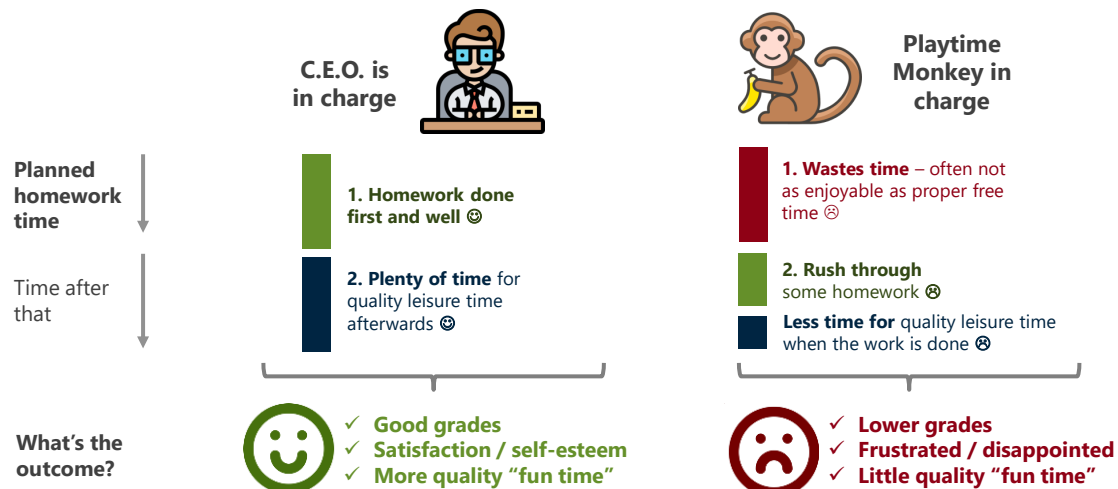
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Who's in charge of your evenings?



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Sidebar: the “Inner CEO” is a metaphor for executive functions – still developing!

Working memory

Self control:

- Setting priorities
- Resisting impulses and temptations

Mental flexibility:

- Sustain or shift attention
- Reacting to changing demands

Planning:

- What to do and when

You are executive function rockstars! Your children will be... with practice.



Taking control of your monkey: 4 steps

Or, “how to develop executive functions through study skills”

Step 1: have a clear plan

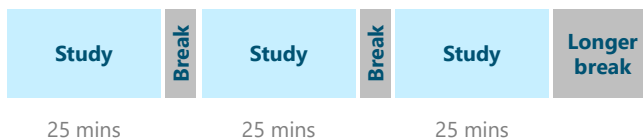


Top tip: habit of 5 minutes per day keeping your planner up to date – ideally at the same time each day

Make sure you have a clear list of tasks telling you:

- What needs doing?
- By when?
- What are you going to do tonight?
- For longer tasks, be specific: what's the next step you can take today?
 - *E.g. don't put big vague tasks like "do history project" – break it down into the first concrete step to take, e.g. "read Chapter 2 on Battle of Hastings"*

Step 2a: train your monkey with timed bursts of work ("Pomodoro" technique)



1. **Set a timer** for e.g. 25 mins (ideally not on the phone..)
 2. **Concentrate hard** for that time
 3. **Take a break** for e.g. 10 mins
- Repeat....

Step 2b: train your monkey through establishing routines

Saturday morning

THIS IS ONLY AN EXAMPLE: YOUR ROUTINE MIGHT BE TOTALLY DIFFERENT!

08.00-12.00	Finish homework
12.15-12.45	Music practice
13.00	Have lunch
Rest of day...	Enjoy yourself!

Establish routines for each day of the week: regular times when you sit down to work

The monkey will come to expect you'll be working at these times, and will make less of a fuss!

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Step 3: the monkey is easily distracted – remove temptation to help him stay focused...



Phone off and out of the room



For devices you use for study e.g. iPad:

- Delete distracting apps
- AND / OR log out of them
- AND / OR go on airplane mode



A little music is OK – make sure it's not distracting

Non-vocal is best...

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Step 4: tricks for calming an over-excited monkey



Set a timer for just
5 minutes



Pick something easy /
fun to start with

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Developing executive functions: bonus thoughts for parents



Model Strategies

- **Relying on reminders** rather than memory...
- ... **Brainstorming a to-do list** for the weekend...
- Using a **calendar to plan ahead**



Coaching Points

- **What went well?** Focus on process – what led to success
- **What would you do differently** next time?
- Goal setting / “**is this part of the plan?**” (if not, why not..?)



Activities That Can Help

- **Sports**
- **Music and theatre**
- **Mindfulness**
- **Puzzles, strategy** (board) games – and even (some) computer games !

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Movies & TV Books Apps & Games Parents Need to Know Latino Research About Us Distance Learning

Minecraft

Game review by David Chapman, Common Sense Media



Common Sense says
 age 8+ ★★★★★
 Sandbox-style game with open online play fosters creativity.
 Linux, Mac, Nintendo Switch, Nintendo Wii U, PlayStation 3, PlayStation 4, PlayStation Vita, Windows, Xbox 360, Xbox One 2011
 Save Rate game

Parents say
 age 7+ ★★★★★
 Based on 290 reviews

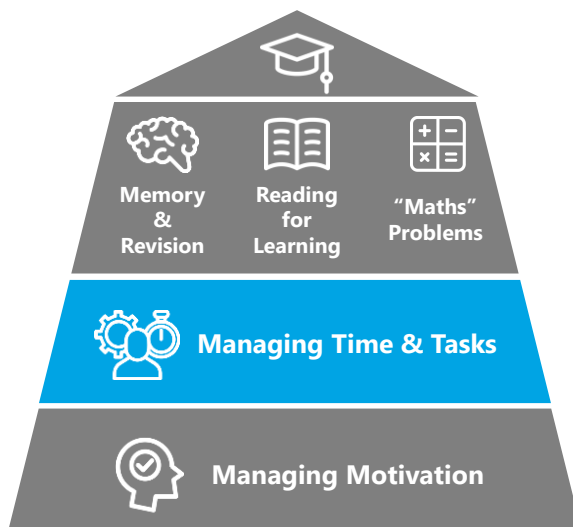
Kids say
 age 7+ ★★★★★
 Based on 1627 reviews

Educational Value A+ ●●●●●	Positive Messages ●●●●●	Positive Role Models not present
Ease of Play ●●●●●	Violence & Scariness ●●●●●	Language not present
Consumerism \$ ●●●●●		

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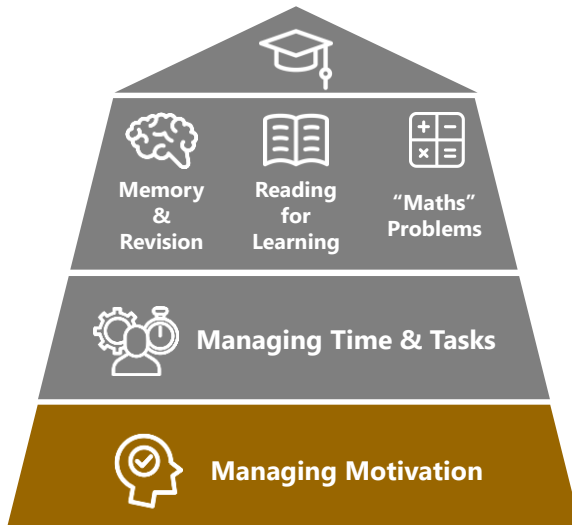
- To-do lists
- Routines
- "Pomodoro" technique
- Managing distraction
- "Just 5 minutes" and "just do something" tricks

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How To Get (And Stay) Engaged:
the science of drive & motivation

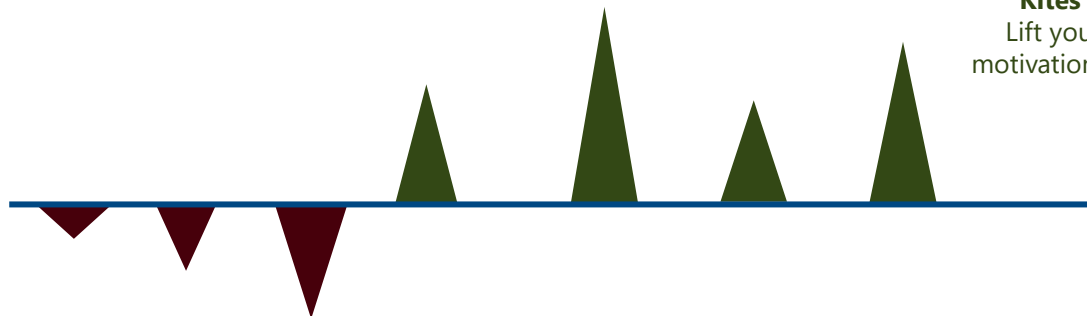
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Getting and staying motivated: when the "kites" outweigh the "anchors", you're motivated



"Kites":
Lift your
motivation up

"Anchors":
Pull your
motivation down

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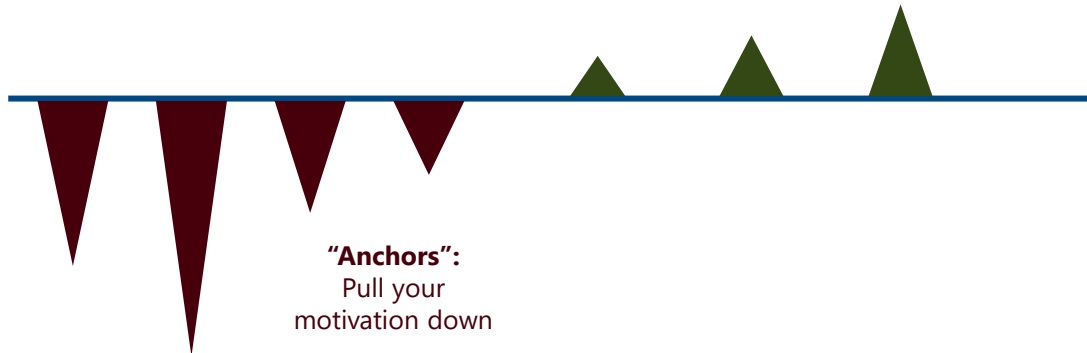


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Getting and staying motivated: but when the anchors pull harder than the kites, you lose your drive

"Kites":
Lift your
motivation up



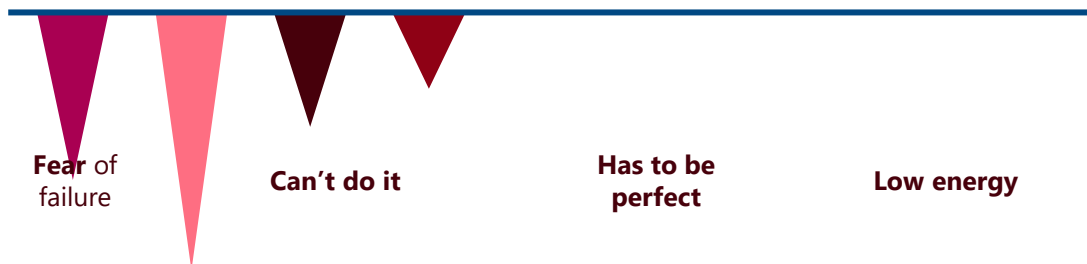
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Getting and staying motivated: eliminate as many of the anchors that hold you down as possible



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Maintaining your energy levels: a very brief reminder...

Energy: the four “hygiene factors” to keep your brain and body running smoothly



(The right)
FOOD



WATER

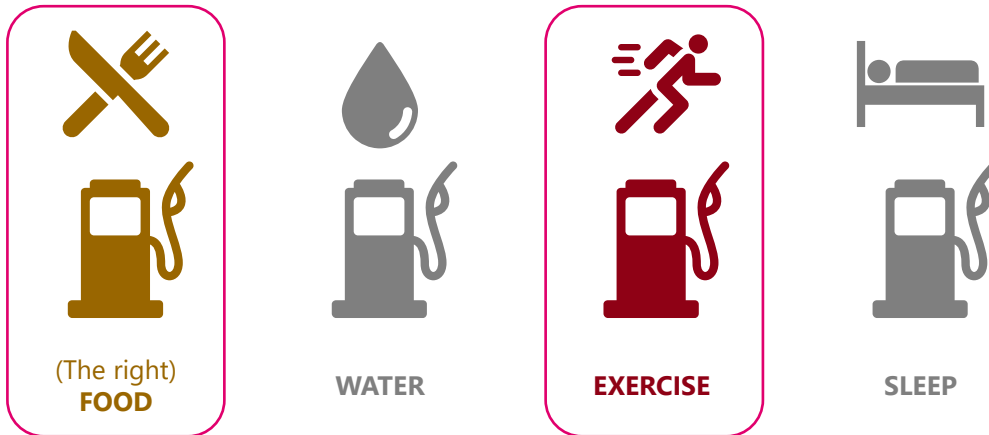


EXERCISE



SLEEP

Two good habits to keep your teen's "prehistoric" brain & body healthy: watch the sugar, keep them moving...



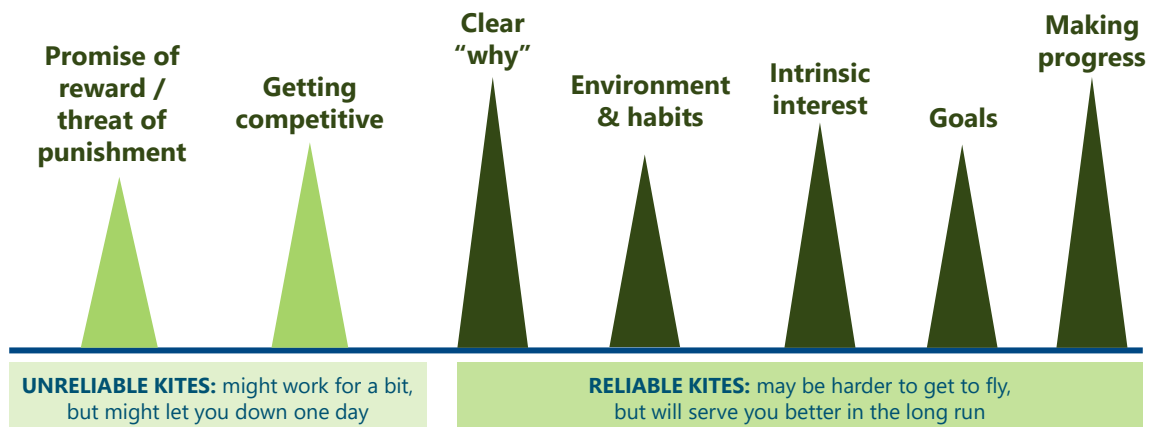
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Getting and staying motivated: nurture the kites that lift you up – especially the "reliable" ones



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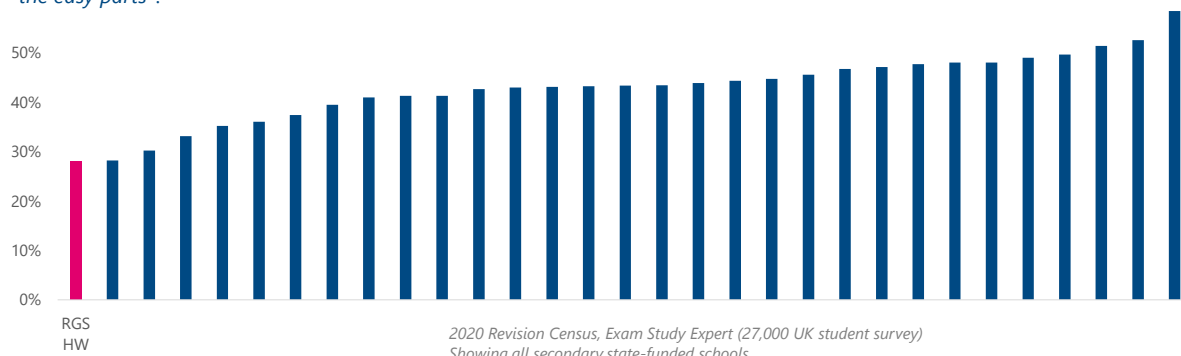
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Our data suggests your son is in a very good place at RGS when it comes to developing resilience

Standard measure of resilience (school average – lower is better!)

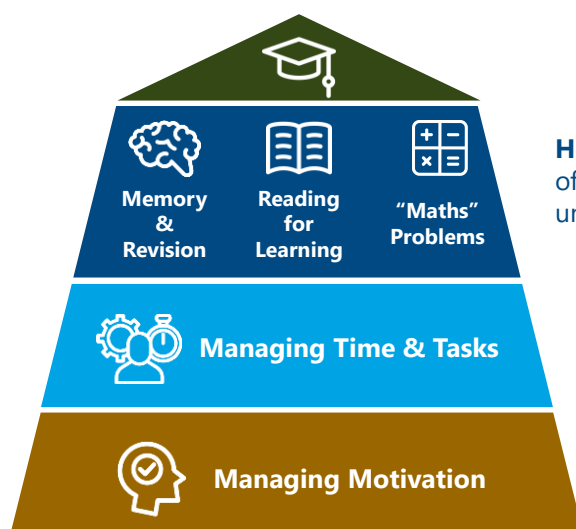
"When the work gets difficult, how likely are you to give up or only study the easy parts"?



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How To Get Things Done: staying organised, productive and managing your time and tasks

How To Get (And Stay) Engaged: the science of drive & motivation

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Today's top tips: 4 DOs and DONTs for acing senior school

DO... use retrieval practice: flashcards, practice questions, pair testing etc.

so DON'T just re-read, highlight, make notes (too much!)

DO... at least highlight when reading for learning – even better, make + test w. flashcards

and DON'T give up on tricky maths problems – trust the process!

DO... work towards good habits for to-do lists and routines

and DON'T let the monkey get distracted!

DO... help your child stay driven: through "why", through environment, through progress

and DON'T let them be scared to make mistakes along the way – push the comfort zone!

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FJTapner, UK



"Awesome"

Charlie Boy, UK



"Utterly impressed"

Ruby7, Australia



"Clear & motivational!"

Rwarman, UK



"Can I just say, you are a god"

Rose, Australia

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Let's stay in touch



Questions? Want to share?

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Wishing them every success