

Managing Expectations:- Self Value and Self Worth

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Every year, at around September (or April for international students), many secondary 4/ IGCSE students would have received their preliminary exam results, while for JC2/ IB Year 6 students, they should be having their preliminary exam at the same period of time. This is a stressful period for everyone, students, parents, school teachers and tutors. I am feeling the heat too. I am constantly worrying for my students, worrying whether they are performing up to standard, whether they are meeting their own expectations, or even their parents' expectations for some cases.

So, what is this big hype about expectations? Sure do, every parent hope that their child is performing up to their expectations, and sometimes, even beyond their expectations, while every student also hope that they can performing up to their own expectations of themselves. Similarly, I am hoping that my students can remember what I have taught them, and be able to apply these knowledge and tips, and perform up to their own expectations.

However, as in every exams, there are always some students who may performed below par, for numerous possible reasons. It may be because unfortunately, the student is feeling unwell on the day of the exam. It may be because the student suddenly blanked out in the examination hall due to anxiety and stress. It may be because the student was too anxious the night before, that he did not manage to get a good night's rest, and it caused him to underperform on the very day. Or it could just be that the student did not prepare well enough for the exam.

I am writing this because I hope that everyone can understand that expectations is something intangible, and it should not be a means to evaluate a child's potential, self worth and self value. Expectations is something that we hope to achieve, something that we try our very best to work towards. If we did not manage to meet our expectations, it could be due to many possibilities. It could be that the expectations are too high, or we did not work hard enough to achieve it, or perhaps, it could just be a case of unfortunate event.

I sincerely hope that at this point in time, for students who managed to perform well and outdone yourself, well done and great job! Your efforts have paid off! You should proudly enjoy the well-deserved break of yours, chill and prepare yourself for

the next phase. Perhaps then, maybe now it's time for you to increase your self-expectations slightly, just a tad, higher, so that you constantly have room for improvement!

On the other hand, for students who did not manage to meet your expectations, perhaps it is then time for you to sit down and re-evaluate. Is it because you have set your expectations too high? Or is it because you did not try your very best to achieve it. Evaluate it yourself, and think it through. No, this is not the time to blame yourself... It is a time for reflection and evaluation, not playing the blame game. To parents who are reading this, try your best not to jump to the conclusion that your child is underperforming because they did not try hard enough. Perhaps, the expectations are indeed a tad too hard to achieve. We do know that not every child is the same, not every child is good in mathematics and science, not everyone is an all rounder.

If this time round, you are still performing below your expectations, remember to re-evaluate. Do not doubt your own value and worth just based on your examination results. Not doing well in a science does not mean your value and worth is any lower than another student who aces all his/her subjects. I have heard a short story, and I would like to share it with all the parents and students reading this.

"If the lesson is to teach a fish how to climb trees, then sadly, the fish will be thinking that its worthless, useless and dumb its entire life."

A student of mine has managed to obtain an A2 grade for her Chemistry preliminary exams. I am happy for her, even though she missed an A1 by 1%. So what? Through our learning journey, she has improved from C6 to A2! It is the journey that counts, not just the end results! Another student achieved a C6. Am I equally happy for him? Yes! Why? Because this is the first time he managed to pass Chemistry! He has come a long way too! Through our learning journey, he has improve from F9 to C6!

So, it may seem like I should be more happy for the student getting the A2 than the other getting a C6. Frankly speaking, not so. In fact, I am equally happy for both of them because both of them have managed to meet their respective expectations! Just because he has only managed to get a C6, it does not, and should NEVER, mean that he is valued any lesser, or worth any lesser than the student getting an A2. I strongly believe that this doesn't determine the self value or self worth of anyone. So long there is an improvement, I believe that's something to be happy for.

Similarly, I hope that all parents out there can try to see your child's performance from another perspective. As long as he has shown an improvement of some sorts, he/she deserves that praise from you, simply because, there is an improvement! I sincerely believe that with the little positive reaction from everyone around the student, gradually in the long run, this will definitely motivate, encourage and instil a positive attitude within the student towards learning, making it a less "painful" learning journey for the student. Focusing solely on the end result may not bode well for anyone, students and parents alike, as this may simply add more unnecessary stress to both parties.

Hence, if your child or student has shown any improvement, regardless of the outcome, do give them a pat on the back, and tell them that they did a good job. Try harder next time!