

10 Commandments To Achieve Excellence Beyond School

While there are many mantras for success, following these ten commandments can lay the foundation for excellence and positive result.

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Researchers and psychologists from around the world believe that excellence can be achieved. And, it can be attained when physical health, relationships and daily living practices are balanced with contribution to the community, purpose and meaning of life. When it comes to children, there is a plethora of research on how they can achieve excellence. Here are ten simple commandments to help your child achieve excellence in learning and life.

Commandment 1: Teach your child to maintain a good posture

Good posture really matters, as the way we hold our body while standing or sitting affects our quality of life. Many children develop the habit of slouching in the chair, which creates a strain on their back. The correct way is to sit with the back straight and shoulders back, and feet placed on the floor. Also, the chair on which children sit should have armrests to support and relax the muscles of the forearms and elbows. If your child uses a computer, make sure that the computer screen is at eye level. This will prevent him from straining his neck muscles. Also, encourage your child to develop the habit of getting up every 20 minutes to walk for a minute or two, as it helps stretch all the muscles.

Commandment 2: Create a good study environment

The study room should be well ventilated and well lit. However, the light shouldn't be too bright as this can make it difficult for your child to read from books and from the computer screen. Overhead light reflects off the computer screen and causes glare, which can interfere with your child's vision. Also, when using a computer, your child should avoid sitting with the window behind her, as this can cause the light to reflect off the computer screen and cause glare.

Before your child sits down to study, ask him to ensure that he has all the books and other articles like geometry set, pen, pencil, and eraser with him. He should keep all the study materials within reach to avoid getting up often to fetch them, as this can prove distracting.

Commandment 3: Give nutritious food

For various reasons, many children don't have breakfast in the morning. Kang and Park published a study titled, 'Does Skipping Breakfast and Being Overweight Influence Academic Achievement Among Korean Adolescents?' in ScienceDirect (2016). According to them, "Skipping breakfast and being overweight are associated with poor academic achievement in Korean adolescents. Eating breakfast and weight control is being discussed as the overlooked factors that may influence better academic achievement."

At the same time, it is essential to keep track of what your child eats. Food high in white, refined sugar, white flour and oil release more energy. This can induce increased activity levels, which can make a child feel tired after a short while and cause poor concentration, headaches, and lethargy. Depletion of energy can also make a child want to eat more, which can lead to weight gain.

Intake of fruits, milk and oatmeal increases blood glucose levels and improves a child's attention span, reaction time and word recall skills. Try to ensure that your child has about five meals a day, which includes three complete meals (breakfast, lunch and dinner) and two small portions of snacks like nuts, fruits and shakes. Nutritional research recommends that children should not go hungry for more than four hours while they are awake and active, and for more than eight hours from the time they go to sleep at night to when they wake up in the morning.

Commandment 4: Teach relaxation techniques

Encourage your child to practice mental relaxation techniques. For example, during study breaks, ask him to close his eyes and concentrate on his breath for a minute. Doing this will help decrease muscle tension and regulate blood pressure. This will also help release endorphins that enhance the feeling of well-being and flush harmful toxins out of the body. Also, encourage your child to engage in activities like reading and sport, which help relax the brain.

Commandment 5: Encourage physical activity

Rigorous physical activity for at least 30 minutes a day helps regulate blood flow, improves mental performance and increases functional activity of the temporal lobe, which stores sensory information. It also helps manage stress, depression and anxiety, releases endorphins, and regenerates and maintains nerve cells. Some rigorous physical activities include dancing, aerobics, walking, stretching and sport.

Commandment 6: Keep your child hydrated

Keeping our body hydrated at all times, even during the winter, is essential. Water helps regulate body temperature, carry nutrients and oxygen to cells, convert food to energy, protect and cushion vital organs, and remove waste from the body. It is recommended to have three litres of water every day. The easiest way to ensure that your child drinks enough water is to inculcate in him the habit of drinking about 300 ml of water every hour and a half.

Commandment 7: Ensure adequate sleep

Make sure that your child gets about seven to eight hours of sleep every day. Instead of sleeping eight hours every night, your child can sleep for six to seven hours at night and the remaining time in the afternoon. It is also important to inculcate a regular sleep routine by encouraging your child to go to bed and wake up at a fixed time. If your child sits down to study within one hour of waking up in the morning, then the amount of information he can memorise and recall can go up to about 83 per cent. As the day progresses, our body's metabolic rate decreases, and we begin to feel tired. This also leads to a decrease in our retention and recall ability.

Commandment 8: Instil the habit of revision

Looking at the same information every day helps in retention and recall. This can be achieved through a process called photoreading. For this, ask your child to make an index of the chapters with at least 30 key words of the topics on a single sheet of paper. Ask her to glance through this sheet diagonally, that is, from the top corner of the left side of the paper to the right lower corner and then from top corner of the right side to the left lower corner, thus forming a X. The best time to engage in photoreading is after waking up in the morning.

Commandment 9: Set a routine

Following a set routine inculcates a sense of discipline, responsibility and commitment in your child. It also enhances planning, problem-solving and decision-making skills in children, which are the stepping stones to excellence. Discuss with your child what he needs to do, how to do the tasks and achieve his goals.

Commandment 10: Develop time-management skills

The most important commandment is time management. Help your child understand the concept of time to help him learn to plan and prioritise. There are some very simple ways of developing time-management skills in your child. Encourage your child to reach school three to five minutes before the gate closes to teach her the importance of being punctual. Help her make a weekly checklist of submissions and assignments and keep track of it to complete the tasks before time. While you try to follow these ten commandments, also ensure that you extend your support to your child. Appreciate your child whenever he puts in his best efforts and teach him to learn from his mistakes.

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