

PARENTING WITH PURPOSE

3 DRIVERS OF MOTIVATION IN CHILDREN

HOW OWNERSHIP, CONFIDENCE, AND
CONNECTION SHAPE A CHILD'S
WILLINGNESS TO TRY



By Bethany Heyne
www.TheKairosBridge.com



MOTIVATION

Understanding motivation in children



Many parents assume motivation is a personality trait.

Some children seem naturally driven. Others appear resistant, distracted, or uninterested. But developmental psychology tells a different story.

Motivation is not simply something a child has or does not have. It grows from the experiences children have within their relationships and environments.

Researchers studying human motivation have found that people are most motivated when three psychological needs are supported:

- Autonomy — feeling that their voice and choices matter
- Competence — believing they are capable of learning and succeeding
- Relatedness — experiencing connection and belonging with others

When these needs are present, children are more likely to:

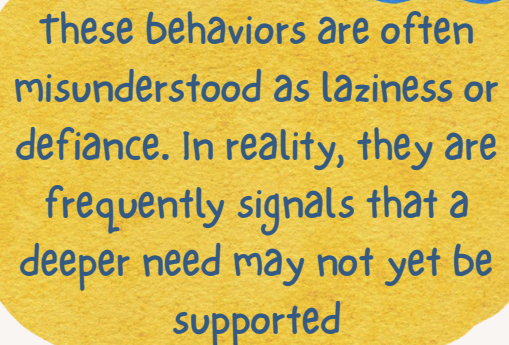
- take initiative
- persist through challenges
- engage with learning
- feel confident trying new things

When these needs are missing, motivation often shows up differently.

Children may:

- procrastinate
- avoid difficult tasks
- give up quickly
- say “I don’t care”
- resist responsibilities

The encouraging news is that motivation can grow over time. Small relational moments — listening, encouraging effort, inviting ownership, and building connection — slowly strengthen the internal drivers that help children move forward with confidence.



These behaviors are often misunderstood as laziness or defiance. In reality, they are frequently signals that a deeper need may not yet be supported

AUTONOMY: HELPING CHILDREN FEEL OWNERSHIP

Autonomy means feeling that your voice matters and that you have some ownership over your actions.

Children are far more motivated when they feel like active participants in their lives rather than passive recipients of instructions.

When autonomy is supported, children begin to think:

- My ideas matter.
- I have a voice.
- I can make choices.

Without autonomy, children may feel controlled or powerless. Resistance often becomes the only way they experience a sense of control.

This can show up as:

- arguing about chores
- procrastinating on homework
- refusing to start tasks
- pushing back against rules

Often the issue is not laziness but a lack of ownership.

Ways to Support Autonomy

- *Offer structured choices: "Would you like to start homework before dinner or after dinner?"*
- *Invite problem-solving: "How do you think we should handle this?"*
- *Ask for their perspective: "What ideas do you have?"*
- *Allow natural consequences when appropriate*



A Helpful Shift: Instead of only directing behavior, invite participation.

Rather than saying: "Do this now."

Try asking: "How do you want to approach this?"

Small opportunities for voice and choice can significantly increase a child's motivation.

COMPETENCE: HELPING CHILDREN FEEL CAPABLE

Competence is the belief that we can learn, grow, and succeed through effort. When children feel capable, they are more willing to try difficult things. When they feel overwhelmed or incapable, motivation often disappears. Avoidance becomes a form of protection.

Children may say:

- "I can't do this."
- "I'm bad at this."
- "I hate this subject."

These statements are often signs that the child feels discouraged rather than unmotivated.

Children build competence through repeated experiences of effort leading to progress.



Ways to Support Competence

- *Break tasks into smaller steps: Large challenges can feel overwhelming.*
- *Encourage effort rather than perfection: Notice persistence, not just outcomes.*
- *Celebrate progress: Even small improvements matter.*
- *Share stories of your own learning process: Children benefit from seeing adults struggle and grow, too.*

A Helpful Reminder

Confidence rarely appears before effort. It usually grows after children experience themselves trying, struggling, and eventually succeeding.

When children begin to believe "I can figure this out," motivation grows naturally.

RELATEDNESS: THE POWER OF CONNECTION

Relatedness refers to our need for meaningful connection with others.

Children are far more motivated when they feel safe, understood, and emotionally connected to the adults guiding them.

When connection is strong, children are more likely to:

- accept guidance
- attempt difficult tasks
- share their struggles
- keep trying after mistakes

When connection feels strained or distant, motivation often weakens.

Children may withdraw, shut down, or disengage from responsibilities.

This does not mean parents must create elaborate experiences or constant activities together.

In fact, motivation often grows through small daily moments of connection.



Ways to Strengthen Connection

- Spend a few minutes each day in focused attention: No phones, no distractions.
- Listen before correcting: Feeling heard builds trust.
- Share simple activities: Walks, games, cooking, or conversation.
- Reflect feelings: "Sounds like that was really frustrating."

These everyday interactions help children internalize a powerful message: I am safe. I matter. I am not alone.

And when children feel connected, their willingness to engage with challenges increases.

COMPETENCE: HELPING CHILDREN FEEL CAPABLE

Motivation is not something children either have or lack.

It is something that grows over time through experiences of:

- ownership
- confidence
- connection

When these needs are supported, children develop the internal motivation that helps them persist through challenges and pursue meaningful goals.

If you would like to help your child strengthen these skills, the Growth Mindset, Goal Setting, and Resilience Workbook for Families was designed to guide children step by step through this process.

Inside the workbook, children will learn how to:

- Approach mistakes as opportunities to grow
- Set meaningful and achievable goals
- Develop persistence and problem-solving skills
- Build confidence through effort and reflection

These tools help children develop the mindset needed to face challenges with courage and determination.

Small shifts in how we guide children today can shape the confidence, motivation, and resilience they carry into the future.

You can get your copy of the workbook on Amazon Now!

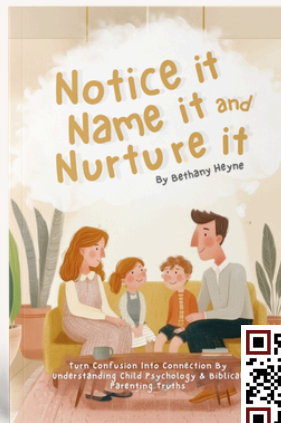
\$13.99

ORDER NOW



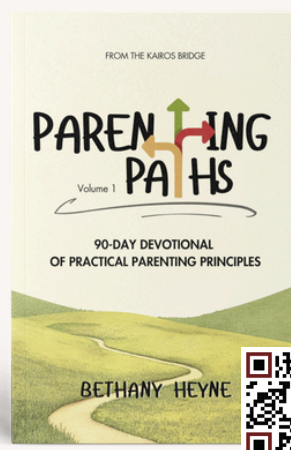
PARENTING BOOKS

Resources designed to strengthen your parenting and your personal journey. Discover tools that deepen self-awareness, resilience, and connection at home.



NOTICE IT ~ NAME IT ~ NURTURE IT

- This is the **cornerstone of the work** we do at The Kairos Bridge
- A simple **three-step framework that transforms everyday parent-child interactions**
- Born from divine inspiration to guide parents with clarity and purpose.
- Rooted in **scripture**, supported by **science** for a balanced, confident approach.
- Helps you understand, respond, and nurture your child's emotional world



PARENTING PATHS - VOL 1

- This **90-day devotional** is an introductory look at some of the most common parenting topics — boundaries, discipline, emotions, communication, attachment, respect, responsibility, conflict & reconciliation
- It follows my signature method of teaching — **Principle, Application, Techniques for parents, Hope & Scripture**
- Want a deeper dive into one of these topics? Check out our other volumes.



EMOTIONS CHARADE

- More than just a kids' charades game—it's a powerful tool that doubles as an emotional regulation tool for kids, helping little ones understand and express their feelings in a healthy, fun way.
- Incorporate into **classroom games** for **family game night**, social-emotional learning activities for kids, or as **conversation cards** for kids' card games to make emotional learning fun and interactive.
- Easy cards teach the name of emotions, Medium cards teach the needs of each emotion, Hard cards teach the gift or toxicity of emotions & Bonus cards highlight Biblical Truths about emotions

Hi and welcome!

➤ Who Am I?

I'm **Bethany Heyne**, founder of **The Kairos Bridge**. I combine my love for Jesus, my background in **pharmacy & child psychology**, and my personal journey as a **mom and bonus mom** to help parents unlock the beauty of how God designed the parent-child relationship to flourish.



➤ What Led Me to Parent Coaching?

My path **began in the world of science and medicine**. I spent years studying data, teaching future clinicians, and training people to think critically. But everything changed when I stepped into motherhood. Suddenly, the challenges were no longer textbook topics; they were bedtime meltdowns, emotional overwhelm, and the quiet pain behind a slammed door. Parenting revealed parts of my own heart that still needed tending.

➤ Was There a Turning Point In My Story?

Yes. A season of **heartbreak and betrayal** stripped away the illusion of control and made me confront deeper emotional and spiritual roots. In that painful season, God revealed that the struggles I faced in my home weren't just about my children... **they were mirrors reflecting the unhealed places in my own heart**. That realization was the beginning of everything.

➤ Why Did I Pursue Further Studies?

I returned to school to pursue my **Master's in Child Psychology & Development**, aiming to deepen my understanding of the emotional, spiritual, and developmental needs of children and their parents. I didn't pursue the degree for a title, but for transformation. And what I learned changed everything about how I parent, relate, and coach.

➤ What Realization Changed My Life?

Our children cannot grow into what we do not first embody. Parenting is not about control; it's about becoming the example. The healing we allow God to do in us becomes the healing we pass on to our children.

➤ Why Did You Start The Kairos Bridge?

When God asked me to begin this work, my initial response was hesitation: **"Why me?"** His answer was simple: **"Because I invited you."** The Kairos Bridge was born from that invitation —a calling to guide parents toward emotionally healthy, spiritually anchored, grace-filled family relationships.

BOOK NOW



I love coaching families to recognize what's Behind the Behavior, to move from Struggle to Strength and Confusion to Connection by Parenting with Purpose. Book your free consult now!