



Internalised motivation in the senior years

A young man must be overcome by reason, not by force. Maxims Publius Syrus

- Adulthood requires internalised motivation. An adult must learn to act from conviction, reflecting on the choices and freely choosing the best options.
- The very process of senior school, with its pace of work responsibly undertaken, builds character. Demands bring with them opportunities for character growth. Growth comes through striving, not from staying comfortable.
- Study should not be for selfish reasons. We need to inculcate into students the vision that they are preparing themselves to serve others: their family and their country. Youth needs ideals lest it become selfish and introspective.
- We must not fall into the mistake of thinking that senior years are just about marks. Hard working, unselfish people are much more likely to be happy in life than those who simply pulled in big marks. Fortunately the two are not incompatible: a student who is responsible in his studies will maximise his marks and more importantly lay essential foundations of virtue.
- We cannot overmanage seniors... in just over two years they will be legal adults and may well be thinking of studying away from home. They need to have everything in place to make their own decisions in life in the most important matters. We must not defend them from the consequences of their actions, particularly if the situation can provide a lesson for the future.
- Nobody has to do Years 11 and 12. Even if the leaving age is 17, there are always other options. If a student decides to continue at school, he must apply himself. It would be extremely bad for a young person to spend two years at school without his heart in it; he would be entrenching habits of laziness and irresponsibility that would continue to dog him well into adulthood. Each young person needs to find something into which he throws himself and works hard... for some it will be school, for others an apprenticeship, or whatever.
- The school seeks to deal with seniors in some ways as an employer would deal with an employee. The emphasis is on objective feedback... of satisfactory or unsatisfactory application, and achievement marks on a scale roughly the equivalent of HSC levels. The senior report reflects this. In Years 11 and 12 boys who show inadequate application are interviewed and letters sent home. Tutor discussions can help greatly. Students who continue to demonstrate unsatisfactory application may be required to attend follow up interviews the Headmaster and their parents.
- Suggested approaches for parents.
 - Help your son internalise the challenge of senior years. Don't nag; occasional deep, heart to heart conversations help you understand your son, not just tell him what to do.
 - Help him to reflect on what is happening and to set his own goals. He must learn to think about issues and to make prudent choices.
 - Help him to know himself and his own strengths (virtues) and shortcomings (a tendency to be lazy, procrastinate, not face issues, or whatever). Facilitate routine, routine, routine.
 - Do not make excuses for your son. He is well capable of excellent acceptable application grades in every subject; if he doesn't, it is his problem, and he needs to come up with solutions. Life will throw far greater dilemmas at him and he needs to be ready.