

# Visit With The Utays

## November 2004

*School Psychology and Education Specialists  
Reprinted from Northern Connections*



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**D**r. Joe Utay, graduate of University of Pittsburgh, is a school psychologist, marriage and family therapist, author, national speaker, teacher, clinic director, and father. He earned tenure as a professor training counselors and school psychologists and is Director of Counseling and Evaluation Services for TLC and part-time professor for Indiana University of Pennsylvania. Dr. Carol Utay, graduate of University of Pittsburgh, is an expert in curriculum, learning, special education, and technology. She has experience as a principal, teacher, consultant, national speaker, professor, author, and mother. "Dr. Carol" is Executive Director of Total Learning Centers. The Drs. Utay live and work in Wexford with their daughter Andrea.

## When Motivation Does Not Work

*Increasing Motivation When Lack of Motivation is not the Problem Worsens the Problem*

***"Report cards just came out and my child, husband, and I were very disappointed. She works very hard and wants to do well, but her grades do not reflect how hard she works. How can we motivate her to do better?"***

Experienced parents and teachers know it would be better if she was lazy! At least then it would be a simple (though not necessarily easy) solution to find motivation that is a good fit for her. But, your daughter needs something else besides trying harder.

In fact, increasing someone's motivation when the problem is not lack of motivation actually can make things worse. We worked with parents several years ago who told their teenage daughter that if she made straight A's they would buy her the car of her dreams. She was, to put it mildly, very motivated. When she fell far short of her goal she was not only more frustrated, but now depressed as well. We evaluated her and found she had a learning disability, or as we like to call it, "learning difference." Once the real problem was addressed, she improved both academically and emotionally.

Start with empathy. Your daughter is hurting because in spite of trying hard she failed to do what she and the two of you expected. She may also be disappointing her teacher and suddenly

may not fit the academic norms of her social group. Let her know you appreciate her **effort**. Tell her you are the one(s) responsible for making available to her the support and help she needs. Only then will it be back on her shoulders to keep up her usual level of perseverance.

Find out what is the real problem. Conference with your child's teacher(s). Ask if you should bring your daughter. If she's included, it may help shed some light on what is going on, or not going on. Sometimes though, it is better to begin with an adults-only conference. Trust the teacher on this. Your goal is to return home with an explanation and specific plan that fits your daughter academically, emotionally, and socially. If you need more than what the school offers to understand, plan, and implement solutions, seek help outside the school. Wherever you go, offering genuine empathy and professional help as needed, are powerful ways to help your daughter prepare today for success tomorrow.

**Please ask!** For more information and great websites to help with education challenges, visit the Total Learning Center website: [www.TotalLearningCenter.com](http://www.TotalLearningCenter.com) or call (724) 940-1090 for a free copy of a TLC cd full of useful information for parents.

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