

INSIGHTS

FOR FAMILIES



Praising your child



**April
2017**

INSIGHTS FOR FAMILIES is provided by your child's school in recognition of your role as a partner in education. Insights is produced by Marcia Latta, communications consultant.

Children thrive on praise. When they are recognized for doing good work, they are motivated to try harder. Praise is important, but it must be the right kind of praise.

Some praise can actually be harmful to children. Children who are praised for personal qualities rather than effort believe their abilities are fixed, and their achievements are based on factors they cannot control, such as intelligence levels that they were born with.

Children who are praised for how hard they work, or effort, are motivated to continue trying, even when they fail. Those children believe that failure is not based on who they are, but rather a process that they have control over.

Growth mindset vs. fixed mindset

According to research by psychology professor Carol Dweck, people develop a growth mindset or a fixed mindset that affects their ability to learn and improve. Dweck developed growth mindset theory after years of research in motivation.

Belief that you can achieve up to the level of the abilities that you were born with is a fixed mindset.

The belief that your effort and the ability to learn from mistakes determine your achievement is a growth mindset. This is the belief that you can control the effort you put forth, incorporate new strategies learned during the process, and continue to try to learn and improve. It is the motivation to keep trying and the ability to use what was learned during the process to try to do better.

Growth mindset praise

Encouragement, or praise, is a key to helping students succeed. Dweck gives the following examples for what to say (growth mindset) and what not to say (fixed mindset) to help children be successful.

Growth Mindset: What to say	Fixed Mindset: What not to say
When you learn how to do a new kind of problem, it grows your math brain!	Not everybody is good at math.
If you catch yourself saying, 'I'm not a math person,' just add the word 'yet' to the end of the sentence.	That's OK, maybe math is not one of your strengths.
That feeling of math being hard is the feeling of your brain growing.	Don't worry, you'll get it if you keep trying. (This is not effective if the strategies don't change.)

<http://bit.ly/2n0B4se>

(Over)

Building grit

Grit is a buzzword right now that grew out of growth mindset research and can be developed and matters far more to a child's ability to reach her full potential than natural abilities and intelligence. Students with grit are resilient. These tips can help children develop grit:

Offer challenges. Give your child the opportunity to challenge herself by tackling tasks that are difficult.

Promote perseverance. Have your children follow through and finish activities, even if they aren't excelling. Pushing through the discomfort of struggling is part of learning.

Have high expectations. Share your expectations and insist that your child meet them. For example, be consistent in requirements for practicing musical instruments.

Let her fail. Comfort your child after a defeat, but model grace and remind her we sometimes fail in life, but we must bounce back.

<http://bit.ly/2n0KaFm>

Be sure your child knows he is special – just like everybody else

Parents love their children, so it is natural to make them feel special, but be careful of making them feel that they are more special than others around them.

Education author Tim Elmore cautions against making children feel more valuable than their peers. The consequences of this may be a young person who has difficulty relating to others. Those children may grow up to believe that they deserve more attention than others and have difficulty managing their emotions when others outperform. Even worse, many of these "special" young adults do poorly in college or have difficulty in jobs where they do not get special treatment from their supervisors.

Ideas for healthy praise

Celebrate the achievements of other kids. Model for children how to encourage other kids by praising what they accomplished. Show them that you can love them and celebrate the achievements of other kids.

Talk about the value of competition as a way to improve. Point out that a position on a sport team or a theatre role is a "position" within a larger group of people. Be sure to reinforce that life is a team sport. This type of tryout or competition is also a good opportunity to focus on improvement and effort if they do not get a role or position on the team.

Talk about experiences as a preparation for the future. Talk to your children as they grow, and be sure they understand that raising them to feel "better than others" won't help them in their careers when they meet other more talented people. Prepare them for a world that doesn't revolve around them, so they won't have unrealistic expectations.

<http://bit.ly/2lrGeB2>