

PROMOTING A GROWTH MINDSET

Helping Children Solve Problems

Creating an atmosphere in which wrong answers are viewed as a learning opportunity and where children are encouraged to take intellectual risks may be the most important factor of all." (Healy, 2004, p. 346)

1. Encourage questions, preferable ones to which you don't know the answer. (I'm not sure why leaves have different shapes, let's collect some and try to figure out some reasons.)
2. Ask open-ended questions and welcome innovative responses. ("What do you think these woods will look like a hundred years from now?" "What would children be like if there weren't any schools and everyone stayed home and learned from a computer?")
3. Encourage divergent approaches to everyday situations, within reason. (If the child can think of a reason for setting the table in a new and different way, why not?)
4. Help your child to tolerate some uncertainty – effective thinkers can delay the best solution to a problem until they have tried out several hypotheses.
5. Provide toys and games that encourage play that the youngster creates himself; praise and admire innovative uses of play, construction, or game materials.
6. Show your child how to estimate. ("You have nine pennies in your bank – that's close to a dime." "We have to drive 295 miles to grandmother's house – that's almost 300 miles.")
7. Practice thoughtful "guess and test". ("I'm not sure what will happen if we put lemonade in the Jell-O instead of water – let's guess some possibilities and then see what happens.")
8. Avoid using the words "right" and "wrong" unless a moral or safety issue is at stake; take time to listen to the child's ideas before passing judgment. Try out the phrase "That's an interesting idea/answer – tell me more/tell me how you got it."
9. Model adult problem solving. ("This looks really hard, but I'll try some things and see if they work.")
10. Help your child feel secure enough to take sensible risks.

(Source: *Your Child's Growing Mind*, Jane Healy PhD)

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- Try not to praise for low-challenge, low-effort, no-mistake success
- Eliminate empty or absent-minded praise (“good job”) from your vocabulary!
- Acknowledge effort & enjoyment
- Ask questions that stimulate critical thinking
- Praise effort, struggle, persistence despite setbacks, but not *just* effort...
- Praise strategies, choices
- Praise choosing difficult tasks
- Praise learning, improving
- Change the language children use to describe themselves and/or their performance from something *stable* to something *malleable*:

“I’m not good at _____ yet.”

“I can’t do _____ yet.”

“I tried but it didn’t work _____ yet.”

- Demonstrate that you too find things hard sometimes and have to work to find the solution.
- What can I learn from this?
- How can I improve?
- How can I help myself or someone else do this better?

For More on Mindsets:

- *New York* magazine: “How Not to Talk to Your Kids: The Inverse Power of Praise”
- *Education World* interview with Carol Dweck
- *NPR* and *The Wall Street Journal* excerpts
- Malcolm Gladwell’s *The Talent Myth*
- Links to the above articles can be found at: www.mindsetonline.com

(Source: *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success*, Carol S. Dweck, PhD)