

Family information: Success

◆ Helping your child to experience success

Teaching your child how to set goals and achieve them by making a plan, working hard, solving problems and not giving up helps them to build life skills that are important for their future. These life skills build their self-confidence and motivation and enhance their ability to persist when they find things difficult. An important starting point is to help your child identify their particular character strengths and ability strengths. Character strengths are personal attributes like being brave or kind, or being a hard worker or a good organiser. Ability strengths are things that they do well such as writing stories, doing complicated sums, drawing cartoons, playing sport, playing a musical instrument or understanding and working with animals.

◆ Key messages to communicate to your child about being successful

Stick with it and don't give up.

When something proves hard to do, stick to your plan and don't give up. If an obstacle gets in the way, see it as a problem that needs to be solved. Sometimes you may have to try a new way to solve the problem.

Mistakes help you to learn.

Everybody makes mistakes when they are trying to achieve their goals. Try to learn from mistakes even if you don't feel happy when you make them. You may not be able to do something YET but with practice and hard work you can learn.

No one is good at everything. Everyone has different strengths.

Everyone has their own strengths. Keep looking for evidence about your character strengths (the kind of person you are) and your ability strengths (what you can do well).

Make a plan.

To achieve a goal you need to make a plan before you start. A plan helps you decide the best steps to take to achieve your goal.

Remember to try hard and work hard.

Trying hard and working hard make it more likely that you will succeed at what you are trying to do. Your brain develops when you work hard to learn new things and this helps you to become 'smarter'.

Have a go and believe in yourself.

Even if something is hard to do and you wonder if you will be able to do it, believe in yourself, take the risk and 'have a go'. You can't be successful if you don't try. You won't always succeed but at least you can say you have given it your best shot.

Try to be well organised.

It's important to be well organised if you want to achieve your goals. Find ways to remember the things you have to do, to find the things you need, and to be on time.

◆ What can you do to help your child learn the skills that underpin success?

- Encourage your child to set a goal and to plan what they need to do to achieve the goal. For young children goals need to be simple, specific and very short term (e.g. reading to you for ten minutes each night for two weeks, making their bed every day for a week, improving their knowledge of specific number facts). Help them to think about what they did to achieve their goal. (Ask them: What steps did you take? What was hard for you to do? How do you feel now that you have managed to do it?)
- Provide lots of opportunities for your child to take on tasks and challenges that they can do (mostly) by themselves (e.g. make a cubby, bake a cake, put on a puppet play, make birthday cards or organise a game). Only give them help when they ask.
- Encourage your child to make, do or organise something a bit complicated and challenging that may be frustrating but will be rewarding when completed (e.g. making a pop-up card, organising an outing or completing a challenging word or number puzzle). Congratulate them on their persistence.
- Do a challenging jigsaw puzzle with your child to show them how to stick with it until it is finished.
- Avoid doing things for your child that they are capable of doing for themselves (e.g. making their bed, packing/unpacking their schoolbag, preparing their breakfast).

- Share your own story about how you achieved a goal that was important to you, stressing how you made a plan, worked hard and persisted despite obstacles or mistakes.
- Help your child to look for and collect evidence that tells them what their strengths are. Evidence could include feedback from other people or ongoing improvement in their 'personal bests' (e.g. in a sport or in music exams) rather than a comparison with others of the same age.
- Give your child more feedback on their effort and the processes they used than on ability (e.g. 'Well done, you really worked hard on that project and didn't give up when some bits proved to be frustrating. You also planned well and were very organised.'). When you focus on effort and the processes used, your child will learn that successfully achieving a goal happens mainly through hard work, persistence, good planning and believing in yourself and is not just based on ability.
- Help your child understand the power of 'not yet': they may not be able to solve a difficult maths problem yet or play a challenging musical piece yet. Adding the word YET – 'I can't ... yet' – focuses on growth and learning, and helps them to understand with time and lots of practice and effort, they can accomplish these tasks.
- Encourage your child to be organised, and provide materials that help them to do this (e.g. colourful or see-through folders, labelling devices, and containers). Show them how to organise their things, pack up their games and toys before bedtime, identify and collect what they will need for school each day, keep their schoolbag in order, remember to pack their lunch in their schoolbag and (for an older child) help them to regularly block out time for homework.
- Play 'Beat the timer'. Use a timer and encourage them to complete an activity such as cleaning up their toys, getting dressed or setting the table before the timer goes off.