



Dealing with Discouragement

We all feel discouraged sometimes, and struggles at school can be one source for children. Here are some ways to help.

Build on strengths

Children learn at different rates, whether swimming, reading, or writing, and they quickly learn to compare themselves with others. Help them recognise their own strengths and understand it is okay not to be good at everything, as long as they are trying their best.

Point out when they show persistence in one area, like a computer game, and how those same qualities can help with something harder, like maths. “Positive forecasting statements” work well too: “If we keep practising your spellings, you'll get better and better.”

Keep expectations realistic

It is important not to set expectations too high. If a child is getting very few spellings right, expecting full marks is not realistic. Instead, practise together and praise small improvements week by week. When it comes to homework, remember it is the child being assessed, not the parent; battling for perfect handwriting or spelling can turn homework into a miserable chore for everyone.

Try small incentives

For children who are really discouraged, small rewards can help: an extra story for reading an extra page, extra screen time for finishing homework before tea, or a sticker chart that builds towards choosing what is for pudding, a trip to the park, or a friend over to tea.