



THE COUNSELOR'S CORNER

Effort

Effort is the  towards a goal either mental effort such a vigorous or determined force exerted

Dear Parents,
EFFORT is an important character trait.

Jere Brophy, Motivating Student to Learn

Tips for Parents: The Importance of Effort

Success depends on two related factors—attitude and effort. For good or for bad, children's attitudes about their ability to succeed determine the kind of effort they put forth to accomplish a task. If children attribute poor performance to the wrong factors, they may be in for a lifelong struggle with failure.

Many children have a ready explanation every time they fail at a task or do poorly in school. What they say gives an important insight into how they think about success and failure. "It wasn't me." Often, a child's explanation indicates that he or she feels out of control. When children say a test was too hard, for example, that's another way of saying they had less control over the result. When children feel out of control, they typically don't try. It isn't that kids don't want to take responsibility. Some children are convinced that people do well because of outside factors—for example, they're lucky or they're liked by the teacher.

Unfortunately, when children believe that success or failure is not related to what they do, they see no reason to change their behavior, so their level of effort stays the same, and so does their pattern of failure.

Feeling out of control can weaken self-esteem. To have good self-esteem, a child needs to feel proud when he or she does well. But children can't feel proud unless they take credit for succeeding. Unfortunately, when children believe success comes from outside factors, they probably won't feel proud even when they do succeed. Instead, they'll decide the task was easy, or they got lucky, or they had a good day. This can have a negative effect on self-esteem. It also won't encourage the child to try harder in the future.



Parenting Tips

- Praise effort rather than success. This is the most important thing you can do. It focuses your child's attention on the right issues.
- Praise improvement. This emphasizes that things are changing and motivates your child to have higher expectations for the future.
- Don't give too much praise. Praise is important, but too much and children begin to doubt that they've really earned it. Remember, it's important for children to feel they've earned their success.
- Too many rewards don't work. This follows the same reasoning as too much praise. Your child needs to feel that a reward is deserved.
- Don't help too much. If you give your children too much help, they can't take credit for what goes right. In addition, they'll begin to think that you don't believe they can succeed on their own—and they'll begin to believe it, too.
- Don't be too sympathetic when your child fails. This is a tough one, but too much sympathy may send the message that you don't believe your child could have done any better.
- Don't compare what other children do. It's hard for a child to focus on effort when others keep emphasizing results. Focus on how hard your child tries. Your child will automatically take pride in the result.
- Talk to the teacher. If your child is having trouble with assignments, ask about them. Are they too hard? Too easy?

For more information:

My Child's Academic Success: [Motivation -- Helping Your Child through Early Adolescence](#)

Three Easy Tips for Improving Student Effort and Motivation

By: Ann Dolin

Effective study skills, motivation, effort and goal-setting all actually play a critical role in a child's academic success. In many ways, they play a larger role than intelligence. Here are our top 3 tips for coaching your student all the way to academic gold.

Tip 1. Focus on the **PROCESS**, not the product:

In the same way that athletes have to attend practice on a daily basis, students with ADHD need daily reinforcement for the development of good study skills. Rather than focusing on the grades they receive, focus on the **process** of putting adequate time and effective systems into homework and studying.

For younger students: Break down a task into steps. Plan it out, and offer praise for each step your student accomplishes. A fun strategy for younger children is taking a large tootsie roll, and cutting it into equal sections that equate to the steps needed to complete the long-term assignment (book reports, science projects, etc.). When your child has accomplished a step, reward him or her with a piece of tootsie roll. This helps the child visualize the task in front of them, as well as rewards them for the **process** of planning ahead.

For older students: Pick one night a week to help your child plan ahead (Sunday nights are often good). Help your child break down long-term assignments into manageable pieces. These incremental steps should be written in your child's assignment notebook or recorded in the calendar of their phone. If your student is resistant to your input, but needs help with long-term planning and daily time management, consider a tutor who specializes in organization and motivation. Work with your child to identify an appropriate reward for completing this planning **process**.

Tip 2: Remove 'smart' from your vocabulary:

This may seem like an odd tip for an educator to suggest. Obviously, we all want our children to be bright and successful. However, studies have shown that when students are praised for their **effort**, rather than their intelligence, their academic skills increase, and their grades, content knowledge, and understanding vastly improve.

Try not to focus on your child's grades with comments such as:

"Wow, you got an A! You are so smart!"

Instead, say something along the lines of,

"Wow, you worked really hard on that project. I noticed all of the time you put into it. I bet you are really proud of the results!"

This reinforces study skills and the effort rather than the end result.

Tip 3: Carve out 30 Minutes to Read and Study as a Family:

Consider blocking off 30 minutes each evening when the entire family turns off all electronics (e-readers not included!) and spends the time reading or studying. If your children are younger, read a story with them. If they're older, take family trips to the library or encourage them to download a book to their iPad or Kindle. This time will allow everyone to relax, read and study without the constant buzzing and beeping of technology.

All students have the capabilities to be all-star students. By taking the emphasis off grades (the product), and putting it on effort (the process), students' motivation and learning will increase.

Literature Connection- Books related to the character trait **EFFORT**:

Lower Grade Titles:

[Leo the Late Bloomer](#)

[All in a Day](#)

[Amazing Grace](#)

Upper Grade Titles:

[Breadcrumbs](#)

[Icefall](#)

[Narnia](#)

[Odd and the Frost Giants](#)

[Sugar and the Fox](#)

[Stone Fox](#)

