

Elementary School Parents[®] *make the difference!*

Mabel Hogard Magnet School
Olga Ross, School Counselor



Show your child how to deal with failure in positive ways

Sooner or later, your child will experience failure. The way you react to that failure can help shape his character and school success.

To help your child bounce back from setbacks:

- **Remind him** that you love him unconditionally. Your love isn't tied to his performance in school.
- **Focus on the positives.** Mistakes are actually opportunities for learning. Help your child think about what he can learn from these experiences.
- **Praise what you can.** "Most of your answers were correct on this test. That's an improvement."
- **Be realistic.** If you know he's doing his best and he still doesn't bring up a grade, don't let him think you

are disappointed. Instead, focus on creating a plan for improvement.

- **Move on.** Don't dwell on the failure. When parents spend too much time talking about setbacks, children can have a harder time moving on.
- **Don't argue** with your child's teachers or coaches to try to get them to change a decision or a grade. Your child needs to learn to respect their decisions.
- **Don't take over.** If your child earned a low grade on a writing assignment, talk about ways to improve, but don't offer to write the next paper for him.
- **Be a role model.** Handle your own mistakes and failures in positive ways.

Source: D. Walsh, *No: Why Kids—of All Ages—Need to Hear It and Ways Parents Can Say It*, Free Press.

Teach your child to handle peer pressure



Most kids face peer pressure when they get to middle or high school. But did you know that even in elementary school, children can feel pressure to fit in and to do what "everyone else" is doing?

Sometimes, that means going along with teasing on the playground. Other times, it means watching a movie at a friend's house that they would never be allowed to watch at home.

Now is the time to teach your child how to handle peer pressure—and how to say *no* to things that don't fit with your family's rules or values. Encourage her to repeat these statements to herself:

- **I can say *no*** to things that would put me in danger.
- **I can make good choices** for myself.
- **I can say**, "You're my friend, but I don't choose to do that."
- **It's OK** if I make choices that are not the same as the choices my friends make.

Source: D. Bloch, *The Power of Positive Talk: Words to Help Every Child Succeed*, FreeSpirit Publishers.

Special days in April help you promote learning all month long



April may bring showers, but it also brings great opportunities to promote responsibility and learning. Here are some activities you can plan to do with your child this month:

- **April 2**—International Children’s Book Day. This day is designed to inspire a love of reading. Grab a book and spend some time reading together.
- **April 12**—National Library Workers Day. Have your child make a card to thank the school librarian for helping him in the library.
- **April 15**—National Laundry Day. Teach your child how to do his own laundry.

- **April 22**—Earth Day. As a family, think of something you can do to protect the earth, such as recycle.
- **April 23**—Shakespeare’s birthday. With your child, act out a scene from one of Shakespeare’s plays. Or, challenge your child to write his own play.
- **April 30**—National Honesty Day. Talk to your child about why it is important to be honest *every* day!

“Develop a passion for learning. If you do, you will never cease to grow.”

—Anthony J. D’Angelo

Make the writing process easier by guiding your child’s thinking



Ask any writer about the hardest part of writing and you’re likely to hear the same answer: Getting started.

What’s true for a seasoned writer is even more true for an elementary school child who’s staring at a blank sheet of paper. What on earth will she write about? And how can she possibly fill all that white space? It can seem overwhelming.

You can help your child get off to a running start by asking questions and offering comments to guide her thinking. If your child is asked to write about a personal experience, for example, follow these three steps:

1. **Help your child make a list** of her recent experiences: the day she put up the tent in the backyard (and watched it fall down); the day she scored a goal in her soccer game;

the time she sprained her ankle; the day her baby sister arrived. Then, have her select one of the experiences to write about.

2. **Ask your child to tell you** about the experience. Telling a story is an effective way to remember the key points. Why were she and her dad putting up the tent? Where was the tent stored? Did they read the instructions? Your child can even draw pictures about what happened first, second and third.
3. **Have your child answer** the basic newspaper reporter questions: *who, what, when, where, why* and *how*. Answering these types of questions will help her collect all of the important details she needs for her writing.

Source: C. Fuller, *Teaching Your Child to Write—How Parents Can Encourage Writing Skills for Success in School, Work and Life*, Berkley Books.

Are you helping your child learn family history?



Learning about family origins is a great way to ignite a child’s curiosity and bring history to life. Answer *yes* or *no* to the

questions below to see if you are helping your child learn more about your family:

- ___ 1. **Do you share old family photos and family stories with your child?**
- ___ 2. **Do you prepare family recipes together?** Preparing and sharing food is a great way to build traditions.
- ___ 3. **Do you encourage your child to ask older family members about their memories of childhood?**
- ___ 4. **Have you looked on a map** with your child to see the country or countries that her ancestors came from? Check out books about those places when you go to the library.
- ___ 5. **Are you keeping a scrapbook** to preserve your family’s history? Keep photos and letters from older generations.

How well are you doing?

More *yes* answers mean you are giving your child roots in family history. For *no* answers, try those ideas.

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Simple strategies can help you encourage respectful behavior



There are days that parents and teachers feel like Aretha Franklin. All they're asking for is a little R.E.S.P.E.C.T.

But in today's society, where disrespect is common, it can be even more of a challenge to raise respectful children. Fortunately, there are still some things that work.

To encourage respect:

- **Be a good role model.** Respect, like most values, is *caught*, not *taught*. When your child sees you treating everyone with respect—from his teacher at school to the homeless person on the street—he'll learn that it's the proper way to behave.
- **Name it when you see it.** When you see other people behaving in respectful ways, make a positive comment. "Did you see how that man gave up his seat so that elderly woman could sit down? What a respectful thing to do." No lecture is necessary. Your child will get the message.
- **Praise it when he demonstrates it.** "Cole, I felt very proud of your respectful behavior when you held the door for Mrs. Jones. I know she appreciated that gesture."
- **Correct it.** If your child slips up, help him make a course correction. In private, say something like, "Remember when we talked about how to greet guests?"
- **Report what you hear.** If a teacher or neighbor tells you that your child greeted her politely, let your child know how proud you are of his respectful behavior.

Help your elementary schooler succeed on standardized tests



Standardized tests have been used to measure student achievement and ability for many years. But it's important

to remember that one test doesn't represent a child's total abilities. A student may get high grades on her classwork, for example, but be too anxious on test day to think clearly.

To help your elementary schooler succeed on tests:

- **Make school a priority.** Students who do well on tests tend to be the ones who study and finish their homework on time. They also miss less school than other students. These are habits you can encourage every day.
- **Develop healthy routines.** For optimal learning, your child needs adequate sleep and a nutritious breakfast every day before school.
- **Communicate with teachers.** In addition to finding out how your child is doing throughout the year, pay attention to test details. Ask the teacher questions, such as, "Which skills do the tests measure?" "How should I help my child prepare?"
- **Promote reading.** Most tests require reading, so make sure your child reads often. Reading skills get stronger with regular practice.
- **Reduce anxiety.** As test day approaches, help your child stay positive and calm. If she is nervous, she can take deep breaths and tell herself, "I can do this!" Remind her that she has your love no matter what.

Q: My son has never had a lot of friends. But there was one boy in his class who spent time with him—that is, until recently. This boy has moved on to a new group of friends and has joined these other students in ignoring my son.

Now my son doesn't want to go to school. I don't know how to handle this. Should I call the former friend's mother to ask her to talk to her son?

Questions & Answers

A: As much as we want school to be solely a place for learning, experts know that there's also an important social aspect. When social issues affect a child's desire to go to school, it's time to take action.

Calling the other parents hardly ever works—and could actually result in more heartbreak for your son. Instead:

- **Talk with his teacher.** Has she noticed that your son is being ignored? Ask for her assistance in making your son feel included in class activities.
- **Find opportunities** for your son to make friends outside of school. Think about programs like the Scouts or other youth organizations. Sometimes, a structured setting makes it easier for kids to get along.
- **Look into clubs and activities** at the school. Connecting with students who share his interests—whether it's making robots, playing chess or singing in the chorus—can help your son find his peer group.

If your son continues to struggle, talk with his pediatrician or the school counselor.

It Matters: Technology

Make online safety a priority in your home



Technology has changed how students learn and how they socialize. Millions of kids in all age groups are online every

day—at home, at school, at friends' homes, at the library—and many are creating online content.

To keep your child safe when he's online:

- **Discuss rules and expectations.** Use software that helps protect children, but supervise carefully, too. Allow your child to communicate online only with people you both know.
- **Set guidelines.** Establish times when technology is not allowed, such as during meals. Set a time when all devices must be turned off for the evening.
- **Remind your child** not to reveal personal information online, such as his name, phone number, school, passwords or location.
- **Keep internet access** out of your child's room. Let him go online only when you can see what he's doing.
- **Learn about the websites** your child wants to visit and the apps he wants to download. Make sure you approve of the content.
- **Encourage your child** to tell you if something inappropriate occurs while he's online. Report your concerns to the authorities.
- **Stay informed** about online safety. For more safety tips, visit fosi.org (Family Online Safety Institute) and netsmartz.org (National Center for Missing and Exploited Children).

Reduce the amount of time your child spends with screens

Screens are here to stay. But that doesn't mean your child should be glued to one all day long.

Too much screen time can lead to obesity, addictive behavior and poor performance in school. So make a point of getting your child away from the screens and on the path to a healthful, active life.

To manage her screen time:

- **Set limits.** Decide on a reasonable amount of recreational screen time and stick with it.
- **Avoid using screen time** as a reward or punishment. It'll make it seem even more important.
- **Offer alternatives.** Your child could read, head outside for some fresh air or just daydream.
- **Keep screens out of bedrooms.** Kids who have devices in their rooms consume much more screen time than kids who don't.



- **Walk the walk.** Let your child regularly see you turn off the laptop and put down your phone.

Source: R. Vitelli, Ph.D., "How Do Bedroom Digital Devices Affect Children?" *Psychology Today*, nswc.com/elem_screen-limits.

Show your child how to evaluate information online



Your child has to write a report, and he wants to do research online. Take this opportunity to teach about safe and reliable

ways to do research. Here's how:

1. **Prepare.** Find websites you trust, such as online encyclopedias for kids. Ask your child's teacher for a list of kid-friendly sites. You can also review the school's website to find recommended online resources.
2. **Supervise.** Sit at the computer with your child. Search for information

together. As you pick resources, evaluate them carefully. Who is the author? What makes him or her trustworthy?

3. **Discuss what makes a site** likely to be legitimate. Is it run by a trusted source? Does it end with *.gov* or *.edu*? These indicate government or educational affiliations.
4. **Look at the information** on the page closely. How recently was it written or updated? Does it represent facts or opinions? Does it refer to other reputable sources?