

Be a Role Model for Optimistic Thinking!

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Here are some specific things you can do immediately to teach yourself and your students to think the way optimists do.

1. Refrain from making statements about yourself that are putdowns of your personality (e.g., “I’m such a ...”). You don’t want your student to copy this discouraging habit!
2. Listen to how your student describes himself. If your student makes a putdown statement about himself or herself that denotes a permanent trait, encourage and help your student REFUTE this putdown with counter examples. (e.g., refute “I am such a lousy writer” with “I didn’t do well on this book report.” Or “this was a flop but I have improved or I did well on my last report.” Refute “I am so stupid.” with “I didn’t do this right.”).
3. When YOU fail or experience setback explain it ALOUD in front of your student by pointing out that setback is only temporary, that the cause of the failure is confined to this one situation and that actions you can change, not your personality, are responsible for the failure. (say “Oh, I really goofed this up, next time I need to ... and I am sure the outcome will greatly improve. I think I can improve.”)

Your student’s words are critical CLUES to how they think and whether they apply optimistic or pessimistic thinking.

4. If your student indicates a failure is going to last a long time (“I won’t ever get this.”) you need to take the time to discuss this outlook and help your student realistically put a limit on how long the failure is going to impact them. Belief that failure will last a long time will cause your student to give up, so you want to refute this kind of statement.

5. If your student indicates a failure has a pervasive effect or undermines many areas of their life, (e.g., “I struck out! I am such a lousy player on the team. I am never going to have friends!”) you need to take the time to help your student to stop magnifying the negative and specify what the failure actually effects. Point out what the failure does NOT effect.
6. Listen if your student indicates failure is caused by who they are as a person or a permanent trait about themselves (“I am just so lazy! “I am really a thoughtless kid.” “I am such a klutz.” “I am stupid.” “I am not good at math.” “I am shy and cannot do it.”). You need to help your child assign the blame to their actions not who they are as a person or a trait they feel they cannot change.

For example, “Right now I am having a hard time in math.”

1. This statement explained the failure as limited in time or temporary, not permanent.
2. This statement explained the failure as a failure of effort or actions, not personality.

Do not say: “I am so lazy.”

Do no say: “I have no brain for math.”

Do not say: “I am too shy of a person to ask for help

Say, “I didn’t study enough last night.” (effort)

Say, “I rushed through the questions too fast.” (actions)

Say, “I forgot to add the bottom problems.” (actions)

Do not say: “I am so lazy.” (personality trait)

Do no say: “I have no brain for math.” (personality trait)

Do not say: “I am too distracted a person to handle it.” (personality trait)

Say, “I won’t pass math this quarter.” (only math failure)

Say, “I didn’t make the volley ball team.” (only basketball not other failures)



Leading. Motivating. Empowering.

Do not say: "I am going to fail school and lose all my friendships."
Do not say: "This is going to ruin my friendships and I will be broke and just sit around and gain weight." (affects many areas of life)
Do not say: "I am too shy of a person to ask for help with anything." (affects other areas of life),