

**Tips for Parents** by Susie Kohl

## *Praising Effort, Not Intelligence*

**H**OW DOES YOUR CHILD REACT when she can't finish a puzzle or get the answer to a math problem? The traditional way to motivate children to keep trying in the face of setbacks is to tell them how smart they are. Convincing children that they have the innate intelligence to learn anything has been the conventional wisdom of empowering children since the notion of a fixed IQ came into existence.

Now decades of research by Stanford professor Carol Dweck, Ph.D., and other social scientists reveals that praising children for intelligence ("Way to go, look how smart you are!") rather than effort ("Awesome, you put so much work into that math problem!") can actually diminish their ability to keep trying when an activity proves challenging. This body of research has resulted in a new approach to understanding the way people, adults and children, react to mistakes or failure.

*Mindset* refers to our view of what creates success: innate ability or a growth approach based on effort. Fixed-mindset individuals tend to dread failure because it's a negative statement on their innate abilities. Of course, it's normal for young children to express frustration when they can't do something the way they envision it. However, older children brought up with the idea they will be successful because they are smart are more apt avoid subjects that are harder for them to learn. People of any age with a growth mindset tend to view mistakes or failures as an opportunity to learn.

We can create these abilities in our children and in ourselves. Whenever we want to encourage children to feel confident, it's helpful to think about the mindset that will help them become truly successful learners. To explore this topic more fully, Google Carol Dweck or watch her TED Talk "The Power of Believing That You Can Improve."

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