



**PARENT SENSE** VICKI CURRAN, EDS, MA, LPC, NCC

## Employ the power of 'yet'

There's a psychology experiment where subjects are given a piece of paper with a black dot in the center of the page. They are asked to describe what they see.

Inevitably, most of them describe the black dot and its position in the middle of the paper. Hardly anyone writes about the white part of the paper.

Believe it or not, the same happens in our lives. We can become so busy contemplating the "dark spots," we sometimes forget to focus on the "bright moments."

Positive thinking is a mental attitude. It is a choice to look at situations in an optimistic and constructive way. Practicing positive thinking is an important skill because it can help our outlook ... and it can help us to model optimism for our children. When we teach our children positive thinking, we are giving them a powerful coping skill and helping them to develop resiliency.

Positive thinking does not mean pretending the negative doesn't exist. Instead, it means acknowledging the

difficulty or challenge and then seeing a way around it. It's simply a reframing technique that enables us to accept that not everything will always go our way, but to also believe that negative things do not have to define us or our day.

Here are some easy ways to help our children — and ourselves — to practice focusing on the positive:

### SUCCESS OF THE DAY

Each night before bed or at dinner, ask your children what their success of the day is or what the "high" of their day is. It can be anything from an accomplishment to a situation where they helped someone. The important thing is to focus on something positive that happened that day — because human nature remembers the "bad stuff" more readily than the good.

### SET A 'NO COMPLAINING' RULE

Teach your children that they are not allowed to complain about something unless they are also ready to identify one or two possible solu-

tions to their complaint. This empowers children to begin to see themselves as problem solvers rather than victims of circumstance.

### ADD 'YET' TO THE NEGATIVES

When you notice your children are labeling themselves negatively by saying things like "I can't" or "I'm never" or "I don't," repeat the negative statement and simply add the word "yet" to their sentence. For example, if they say, "I can't tie my shoes!" repeat their statement as, "You can't tie your shoes — yet."

You may get some eye rolling or heavy sighs, but keep the "yets" coming! What we say and believe about ourselves can become a self-fulfilling prophecy. Adding "yet" changes the mindset from something that seems "true" to a statement of growth and possibility.

If you really want this to sink in for kids, take a blank sheet of paper and write across the top "Things I can't do — yet." Have your child write down all the things that they can't do yet.

Use colorful pens or markers to make it look festive. Post the paper somewhere they can see it so it can become a bucket list of aspirations and accomplishments. Think of a way to celebrate as each "I can't yet" becomes a "Look what I can do!"

Hopefully practicing positive thinking can help our children to start seeing failure as a bridge to opportunity instead of as the end of the road!

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For more information or a list of local licensed professionals, contact Coastal Community Counseling Resources at 732-612-3148.