

Mindsets for Happiness and Success



RESILIENCE

...is knowing that YOU are the only one with the power to pick yourself up.

Let's TALK about LIFE

The single most important thing we can do for our children is talk to them about life. At dinner, at breakfast, eating burgers in the car, or sipping hot cocoa before bed. Decades of research has shown that children who eat 3 to 4 times a week with their parents are 3 times less likely to get involved with drugs, alcohol, or smoking. They do better in school, have higher self-esteem, and stronger relationships with their parents. With the little time busy parents have, we might as well talk about what's important. All it takes is 10 minutes a day.

LET'S TALK conversation starters have been strategically designed in a specific sequence to help children (and parents) learn the

Happiness and Success

twelve most important mindsets that lead to happiness and success. They are based on decades of research and the literature from hundreds of experts who study happiness and success. In the same way that we learn to walk, play a musical instrument, speak a new language, or dance the salsa, we also build mindsets through repetition. By repeating new, similar thought patterns over and over again during a 30-day period, we actually rewire certain ways of thinking into our brains. Eventually it becomes a habit that we continue without any effort. LET'S TALK is designed for ages five and up. Feel free to adapt the questions to what you know your children are able to understand and can relate to.

RESILIENCE Intro - 1

Life is one big experiment. Toddlers have no problem failing - over and over again - as they learn to crawl, stand up and walk, or stack blocks. They are not saying to themselves, "What an idiot! You've fallen twice now. You'll never figure this out. What a loser!" No, they are probably thinking, "Wow, this is fun. Look what I just did! If I keep trying, I'll get there." And they do. Until their parents (or other adults) start teaching them that failing is a bad thing, something to be avoided at all costs. This is exactly how those negative thoughts get programmed into our minds that can limit us for the rest of our lives.

Introduction for Parents

RESILIENCE Intro - 2

The fear of failing is a mindset that adults (parenting experts, teachers, administrators, and other professionals) have convinced parents to teach their children over the last couple of decades. As the self-esteem movement gained momentum and everyone assumed that helping children avoid negative feelings would build their self-esteem, failure became a word - and an experience - that we all try to avoid. Yet, if you pick up any book on success, you will find one strong, common theme. Failure is a necessary part of success and the sooner you get comfortable with failing, the quicker you will succeed.

Introduction for Parents

RESILIENCE Intro - 3

Every time a parent steps in to help, rescue, or solve problems for their child, they are handicapping them, robbing them of critical life experiences they need to become resilient. This is important to understand. They are sending the subtle message that they don't believe their child is smart enough, resourceful enough, or emotionally strong enough to manage a situation or solve a problem. How is that for negative programming? It's the opposite of what parents want to accomplish; build self-esteem. Use these conversation starters to help your children develop the kind of self-talk that leads to happiness and success.

Introduction for Parents

#1 What is Resilience?

Resilience is the ability to bounce back, recover from, or quickly adjust to adversity and challenge. This includes anything from a minor difficulty or disappointment to a major defeat or disaster. Resilience is the fortitude to get back up, brush off the dirt, and try again. The smallest inconvenience or frustration, which is perceived as nothing to a resilient person becomes a huge disaster in the mind of someone who is not. Resilience is a set of emotional tools we develop throughout our lifetime. It's really about how we perceive life's difficulties, how we learn to manage them and, most importantly, how we talk to ourselves when things don't go as planned.

Reference Card #1

#2 Why is Resilience Important?

Shad Helmstetter, an expert on resilience, tells us that "The reason why some people accomplish nearly every task more easily than others, achieve their goals more readily, and live their lives more fully, is this: Those who appear to be "luckier" than the rest have actually only gotten better mental programming to begin with, or have learned how to erase their old negative programming and replace it with something better....The brain believes what you tell it....Your success or failure in anything will depend on your programming – what you accept from others and what you say when you talk to yourself... You become what you think about most."

Reference Card #2

#3: What kinds of situations are difficult or challenging?

- Trying something new you might not be good at, which could be embarrassing.
- Completing something that is more difficult than you anticipated, which is frustrating.
- Continuing to work towards something you could fail at, which can be humiliating.
- Doing something you haven't had time to prepare for, which is nerve-racking.
- Performing in front of others, which is scary.
- Failing at something you worked hard to achieve, which is disappointing.

Reference Card #3

#4 What negative comments might someone say to themselves that could sabotage their chance at success?

I'm such a loser.
I always mess up.
Why should I try, I know it won't work.
I'm not smart (or talented/athletic) enough.
Nobody likes me.
That's just my luck.
I'm too (shy, fat, slow, stupid, uncoordinated).
I never excel at anything.
What made me think I could do this?
I can't seem to get a break.
I'm just not good at (math, sports, friends).
I can't do anything right.
It's hopeless. I'll never finish it.
I don't know why she picked me for this.

Reference Card #4

#5 How do we challenge the truth in those negative comments?

You ask yourself if the statement is true and counter with realistic comments that a caring parent, teacher, or friend might say.

Nobody likes me: That's not true, you have lots of friends and teachers who like you very much because you are kind, funny, creative, and a good person.

I always mess up: That's not even close to the truth. Just think about the great job you did on that project for history class and how happy you made that kid you stood up for who was being bullied. PE would be so boring if you weren't there making jokes.

Reference Card #5

#6 What positive comments can we substitute for the negative ones?

The most important scientific fact to remember is that the mind can't think two thoughts at the same time. So, if you can replace a negative thought with a positive one - that is believable - then you can turn things around. The key word is BELIEVABLE. It's a waste of time to tell yourself you are the best, that your competition doesn't have a chance, that you are going to ace the game, contest, or performance - if you haven't prepared. Your real self will not buy it. Look for realistic facts about your strengths and past experiences that were successful and talk to yourself in the positive, encouraging, supportive way that your best friend would.

Reference Card #6

What is resilience?

Start by discussing what each of you thinks resilience is. Family members will come up with a variety of definitions. Then read the definition we provide on Reference Card #1 and talk about what that all means to you.



Day 1

Why is resilience important?

Now that you have a better idea of what resilience is, talk about why it is important. How will it impact your lives? Refer to Reference Card #2. Are resilient people happier or more successful than those who are not? If so, in what ways?



Day 2

What makes us give up and quit when things get difficult?

Everyone has times where they get frustrated, feel discouraged and give up. Sometimes there is someone (a parent, teacher, coach, or friend) who encourages us over the negative hump to keep going. Sometimes we just quit. Why?



Day 3

Why is failure a necessary part of the path to success?

Experts who study successful people tell us that failure is a necessary part of success and that the sooner you get comfortable with failing, the quicker you will succeed. Why does failure lead to success?



Day 4

Why is it uncomfortable to try something new?

Most of us avoid trying new things, especially if we don't think we will be good at it. What makes us uncomfortable and why do we avoid opportunities that could be good or exciting for us?



Day 5

Is there anything you wish you had not given up on?

This is a great opportunity for parents to share experiences in their lives when they quit something they wanted to accomplish and wished they hadn't. Hearing someone else's story makes it easier to think of your own.



Day 6

What kinds of situations are difficult or challenging?

Read Reference Card #3 and talk about the different situations that might make someone feel like quitting or not taking on a challenging opportunity in the first place. Brainstorm other situations and list them on the back of Card #3.



Day 7

What negative comments might someone say to themselves?

Read Reference Card #4 for examples and talk about the kinds of negative comments people often say to themselves that sabotage their chance at success. Brainstorm other similar comments and list them on the back of Card #4.



Day 8

How do we challenge the truth in those negative comments?

Read Reference Card #5 for examples and talk about other ways we can look at our personal strengths and past experiences to question the truth in the negative comments we make to ourselves. List them on the back of Card #5.



Day 9

What positive comments can we substitute for the negative ones?

Read Reference Card #6 for an explanation about the best way to create positive comments to substitute for the negative ones that pop into your mind. It happens to all of us, and it helps to plan and prepare. List some on the back of Card #6.



Day 10

A history report in front of the entire class - Part 1

John has been working on a history report for 3 weeks now and it's his turn to present it to the class - all alone. He is nervous and scared. What negative things might he say to himself that will only make him more nervous?



Day 11

A history report in front of the entire class - Part 2

How might John question the truth of those negative comments (from Day 11), and develop some positive ones (based on his strengths and past experiences) that he could substitute for the negative ones?



Day 12

Not enough time to prepare for cheerleader try-outs - Part 1

Jane signed up for cheer try-outs and doesn't have a lot of time to create and perfect her routine. She's worried she'll make a fool of herself. What negative things might she say to herself that will only make her more anxious?



Day 13

Not enough time to prepare for cheerleader try-outs - Part 2

How might Jane question the truth of those negative comments (from Day 13), and develop some positive ones (based on her strengths and past experiences) that she could substitute for the negative ones?



Day 14

Learning a new instrument is harder than he thought - Part 1

Dylan plays in the school band. He offered to learn another instrument for homecoming to replace a sick band-mate. It's a lot harder than he thought. What negative things could he say to himself that might make him want to quit?



Day 15

Learning a new instrument is harder than he thought - Part 2

How might Dylan question the truth of those negative comments (from Day 15), and develop some positive ones (based on his strengths and past experiences) that he could substitute for the negative ones?



Day 16

It's scary to try something you think you might fail at - Part 1

Sally wants to try her hand at something creative (painting) and enter the school art contest. She's never done it before and is afraid she might not be very good at it. What negative things could she say to herself that would stop her from trying?



Day 17

It's scary to try something you think you might fail at - Part 2

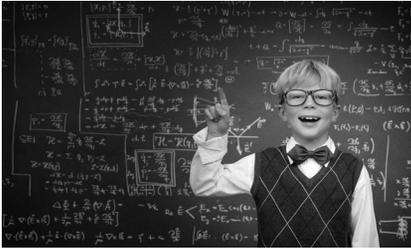
How might Sally question the truth of those negative comments (from Day 17), and develop some positive ones (based on her strengths and past experiences) that she could substitute for the negative ones?



Day 18

He wants to skip a grade in math but panics before the test - Part 1

Rick loves math and can skip 7th grade if he gets an A on the 7th grade final. He starts studying and panics that he might not succeed. What negative things might he say to himself that will only make him quit instead of keep going?



Day 19

He wants to skip a grade in math but panics before the test - Part 2

How might Rick question the truth of those negative comments (from Day 19), and develop some positive ones (based on his strengths and past experiences) that he could substitute for the negative ones?



Day 20

A freshman gets asked to play for the varsity team - Part 1

Steve plays freshman football and has been asked by the coach to suit up for varsity. He doesn't know anyone and is not sure if he is good enough. What negative things might he say to himself that'll make the situation more difficult?



Day 21

A freshman gets asked to play for the varsity team - Part 2

How might Steve question the truth of those negative comments (from Day 21), and develop some positive ones (based on his strengths and past experiences) that he could substitute for the negative ones and make it a successful experience?



Day 22

The first performance of the school play gets one bad review - Part 1

Michelle is in the drama class and they just performed their first play. They got one nasty review and she wants to quit. What negative things might she say to herself that could sabotage future performances.



Day 23

The first performance of the school play gets one bad review - Part 2

How might Michelle question the truth of those negative comments (from Day 23), and develop some positive ones (based on her strengths and past experiences) that she could substitute for the negative ones?



Day 24

He wants to sing the solo, but the practices are exhausting - Part 1

Henry's drama teacher has made every student who is trying out for the big solo part stay after the regular practice and practice more. He's exhausted and wants to quit. What negative things might he say to himself that will make him give up?



Day 25

He wants to sing the solo, but the practices are exhausting - Part 2

How might Henry question the truth of those negative comments (from Day 25), and develop some positive ones (based on his strengths and past experiences) that he could substitute for the negative ones and get through this difficult time?



Day 26

Two bad quizzes create doubt for the upcoming test - Part 1

Bill normally excels in science. He has an important test coming up but is doubting himself because he did poorly on the last two quizzes. What negative things might he say to himself that will prevent him from relaxing and doing his best?



Day 27

Two bad quizzes create doubt for the upcoming test - Part 2

How might Bill question the truth of those negative comments (from Day 27), and develop some positive ones (based on his strengths and past experiences) that he could substitute for the negative ones?



Day 28

Is the plan she worked on not good enough to share? - Part 1

Susan's teacher asked his students for ideas to increase class participation. Susan worked hard on a plan but now thinks it's not good enough to share. What negative things might she say to herself that will only make her less confident?



Day 29

Is the plan she worked on not good enough to share? - Part 2

How might Susan question the truth of those negative comments (from Day 29), and develop some positive ones (based on her strengths and past experiences) that she could substitute for the negative ones?



Day 30