

Mistakes Happen: Help Your Kids Bounce Back



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Many historians feel that one of Winston Churchill's greatest speeches was given at a graduation ceremony at Oxford University. He had worked on the speech for hours. When the moment finally came, Churchill stood up to the cheering crowd, and in a strong, clear voice shouted just three words, "Never give up!" He paused a few seconds and shouted the words again, "Never give up!" He then reached for his hat and slowly walked off the podium, satisfied that he had told the graduates the messages they needed to succeed.

We need to pass on Churchill's message to our youth. After all, if our children are to succeed in this competitive world, they must learn to hang in there-especially in challenging times-bounce back if they don't succeed *and try again*. Unfortunately, many kids have never learned this valuable lesson, but family life offers countless opportunities to teach it to them. The following secrets from my book, [The Big Book of Parenting Solutions: 101 Answers to Your Everyday Challenges and Wildest Worries](#) (Jossey Bass) show ways parents can help children rebound from mistakes.

1. Be an example of bouncing back. The first step is the most important: *model to your children how you bounce back*. My girls scout leader years ago, Mrs. Flora Cox, was an expert. Before she started a task she wasn't sure she could do (such as lighting a fire with sticks or setting up a tent) she'd always say, "I'm not stopping until I succeed." And she made sure we overheard her. We soon found ourselves copying her words. I now realize she intentionally made a few mistakes, but did so to show us she wouldn't give up. Her example was lasting. So take a pledge to show your children how you won't give up at the first signs of difficulty.

2. Set realistic expectations. A critical part of bouncing back is making sure your expectations are ones each child is capable of achieving. These questions help you assess if your expectations are realistic:

- Is it reasonable or am I expecting too much?
- Does he have the skills and knowledge to achieve my expectation?
- Is it what she wants or I want for myself?
- Am I conveying that I believe he's capable?

Look for ways to stretch your children's confidence and abilities, but never to a point where it snaps their spirit. It's a fine line, so make sure you're on the right path.

3. Start a "bounce back!" motto. Develop a family motto to remind your children not to let mistakes get them down. A mother told me she spent one Saturday morning brainstorming mottoes with her family such as "Mistakes Don't Get Us Down!" "The Family that Doesn't Quit," and "We Don't Give Up!" The girls then selected one and created a poster to remind them. Each child then cross-stitched the motto onto a cloth square, sewed it into a pillow, and put it on their bed to remember.

4. Create a "Stick to It" award. Ask your children to find a thick stick on a hike at least the length of a ruler. Print "Stick to It Award" across the stick with a black marking pen. Explain that it means "hanging in there and not giving up until you finish what you started." Then tell your family to be on alert the next

few weeks for other family members showing special “stick-to-it-ness” and report them to you. Each evening announce the names, and print their initials on the stick. Make sure to tell the recipients what they did to deserve the award. You might even set a contest to see how long it takes to fill the stick with your children’s initials.

5. Help children see mistakes as opportunities. I watched a teacher give a piece of rug yarn to each student on the first school day. She said, “This year you’ll be making lots of mistakes. That’s how you learn.” She explained that she wouldn’t be watching their mistakes, but instead to see if they learned from them. Each time they made a mistake-then bounced back-they were to tie a knot in the yarn. After each knot she’d ask them to explain what they learned from their mistake. Her technique helped her class recognize that mistakes can be a chance to start again, and it’s an essential part of learning to rebound. You might try the idea with your family.

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6. Respond to errors noncritically. Many children cut short their opportunities to succeed because they give up when they make mistakes. So the next time your child errs, here are few ways to respond:

- *Stay nonjudgmental and help him focus on what she’s trying to achieve.* Calmly ask, “How did you want this to turn out?”
- *Fight the temptation to say, “I told you so.”* Instead try, “That’s interesting” or “That wasn’t what you had in mind, was it?”
- *Don’t shame or ridicule.* Nobody likes to make mistakes, and everybody hates to be reminded of making them.
- *Help him learn from the mistake.* A big part of bouncing back is learning from the error. Ask, “What did you learn?” or “What will you do differently next time?”
- *Teach an affirmation to bounce back.* Select a phrase such as: “It doesn’t have to be perfect,” “It’s OK to make mistakes,” or “Everybody makes mistakes,” then help her practice saying it to encourage herself to bounce back.

7. Offer support only when needed. No parent wants their children to suffer disappointments, and often our first instinct is to try to remedy their mistakes for them. Doing so deprives them of chances to find solutions and rebound from defeat. So offer help only when really needed, and convey confidence in their abilities to succeed. You might say, “I know you can do it. Hang in there.” Of course, when your son or daughter finds the task too difficult and quits, support them. Then help them recognize what they could do the next time so they do succeed.

The difference between successful and unsuccessful people often lies in how they view their mistakes. By using everyday moments you can help your children not only learn to rebound from mistakes, but also strengthen their self-confidence. And those are two critical lessons they’ll use the rest of their lives.

Read more: <http://galttime.com/article/parenting/22/2646/mistakes-happen-help-your-kids-bounce-back#ixzz2PK0QpDNZ>