

Miriam's Growth Mindset & Effort Tip Sheet

Fostering independence and resilience at home

This guide helps you shift your language from praising innate ability to encouraging effort, strategy, and persistence, which are the true drivers of growth.

Section 1: Focus praise on the process, not the outcome

The goal is to praise the actions the student controls, not the ability or the result.

X Instead of... (Praising Ability/Speed)	✓ Try this... (Praising Effort/Strategy)
"You are so smart, you did that quickly!"	"I see you really stuck with that tough problem. Your hard work and the way you tried a new strategy really paid off!"
"You're a natural at this."	"I can tell you put a lot of time and effort into this; it shows in the quality of your work."
"You did it perfectly!"	"That was a really challenging section, but you didn't give up. Your persistence is impressive!"
"You got the highest score!"	"You used a great strategy here - breaking the project down into smaller steps was smart."
"You're just good at math/writing."	"Look at how much better you are at this than last month! That practice is really paying off."

Section 2: Guide, don't rescue; supporting productive struggle

When your student is stuck on an academic or social roadblock, act as a coach to help them use their own thinking.

- Ask about their process: "What have you tried so far?" (Encourage them to try 2-3 problem-solving strategies first.)
- Help them localize the problem: "Where did you get stuck, specifically?" or "Can you break this big problem down into three smaller steps?"
- Validate the feeling: "I know this is frustrating, and it's okay to feel that way. I believe you can figure out the next step."

Section 3: Reframing mistakes

Failure is simply data - information used to refine strategies and encourage growth.

When a student struggles or performs poorly on a task, help them analyze the process:

- What did you learn from this result?
- If you had to do it again, what preparation strategy would you change?
- Are there any resources or strategies you could use in the future in a similar situation?

Section 4: Supporting persistent drive for autonomy (PDA)

For learners who struggle with anxiety-driven demand avoidance, reduce the feeling of command by fostering a sense of control and partnership.

Strategy	Example Language
Use Indirect Language	Use "I notice..." or "I wonder..." statements. <i>Example: "I noticed it's the time when you normally start homework."</i>
Offer Choices	Give them a say in their schedule or process. <i>Example: "Would you like to start with math or reading tonight?"</i>
De-personalize the Request	Blame the system, not yourself. <i>Example: "The school wants this assignment done by Friday, so let's figure out a schedule that works for you."</i>
Work Together	Suggest working on separate tasks together. <i>Example: "I need to read emails; can we work side-by-side on our tasks for 20 minutes?"</i>



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