Changing Negative School Talk into More Helpful Thoughts

Negative thoughts about school can become a habit. We do not want to tell children that their feelings are wrong or force them to "just be positive." Instead, we can help them turn very negative thoughts into thoughts that are more balanced, realistic, and helpful.

Instead of This... Try This!

"I hate school!"

→ *"I know school isn't your favorite. What is one part of the day that is okay?"*

"School is the worst!"

→ *"It sounds like you're having a hard time with school. What is one thing that could make tomorrow a little better?"*

"I don't want to go!"

→ *"I hear you. You don't have to be excited about it, but you can still get through the day."*

"Nothing good ever happens at school."

→ *"Nothing good? Let's think carefully. Was there even one small moment that was okay?"*

"Everyone else likes school except me."

→ *"A lot of kids have things about school they don't enjoy. You are not the only one."*

"Tomorrow is going to be awful."

→ *"You don't know exactly how tomorrow will go. Let's focus on one thing you can look forward to."*

Helpful Phrases to Use at Home

Try saying:

- *"You don't have to love school to have a good day."*
- *"Let's look for one good thing."*
- *"Hard days do not last forever."*
- *"What is one thing you can do to help yourself today?"*
- *"You have gotten through hard school days before."*
- *"You can feel nervous, frustrated, or annoyed and still have a successful day."*
- *"Let's focus on today instead of worrying about the whole week."*

A Simple Daily Challenge

At the end of each school day, ask your child to share:

1. One thing that was okay or good today
2. One thing they handled or worked through
3. One thing they can look forward to tomorrow

The positive thing does not have to be big!

It might be:

Seeing a friend, Recess, Lunch, A favorite class, Finishing an assignment, Talking to a teacher, Learning something new, Going home at the end of the day!

The Goal Isn't "Perfect Positivity"

We all have negative thoughts sometimes. The goal is not to pretend that everything is wonderful.

The goal is to help your child move from: "Everything about school is terrible."

to:

"Some parts of school are hard, but there may also be some parts that are okay."

Small changes in the way we talk and think about school can help create a more balanced and hopeful mindset over time.