Helping Your Child Build a More Positive Relationship with School

Some children simply do not enjoy school, and that is okay! Your child does not have to love every part of school to learn, grow, and have successful experiences there. If school has always been difficult or something your child dislikes, the goal is not necessarily to convince them that school is "the best." Instead, we can help them build a more balanced and positive way of thinking about it.

What Parents Can Do:

Validate feelings, but don't let negative thoughts take over. You can acknowledge your child's feelings without agreeing that school is terrible.

- Instead of: *"You're right. School is boring."*
- Try: *"I know school isn't your favorite. Sometimes we still have to do things we don't love."*

Help your child find the "one good thing".

Encourage your child to identify one thing each day that was okay, enjoyable, interesting, or successful.

Ask:

- *What was the best part of your day?*
- *Who did you talk to today?*
- *What made you laugh?*
- *What was one thing that went better than you expected?*
- *What is something you're looking forward to tomorrow?*

It is okay if the answer is something small!

Focus on what your child CAN control

Your child may not be able to control every part of the school day, but they can control some things.

Talk about:

- How they treat others
- Trying their best
- Asking for help
- Using coping skills
- Choosing fun memories, positive or helpful thoughts
- Finding something to look forward to

Praise effort and bravery

Notice when your child does something difficult, even if they still complain about it.

Try saying:

"I know you didn't want to go today, but you did it anyway. That shows a lot of strength."

Avoid long negotiations about school

Listening to your child's feelings is important. However, repeatedly debating whether they should go to school can sometimes make negative feelings bigger.

Keep the message calm and consistent:

"I hear that you don't want to go. School is still the plan, and I know you can get through today."

<u>Remember</u>

Your child does not need to love school every day. The goal is to help them learn:

- *"I can have a hard day and still get through it."*
- *"I can dislike something without letting it ruin my whole day."*
- *"There may be something good waiting for me, even on a day I don't feel excited to go."*