



Ten Proven Ways to help your children at school

It is now well known that we all have potential to achieve and that potential is a mixture of what is commonly called nature and nurture. Nature is what you were born with, your genetic inheritance. The nurture part is where you can make a contribution.

1. Teach your children that the stepping stone to success is called failure

Whatever we learn, at the start we are not good at it. Even as adults we start out being bad at something. To get good at something you start off bad at it. That is why you need to encourage your children to accept failure as part of the learning process. Your children need to develop two personality traits:

- Little fear of failure, knowing that it is part of life
- The resilience to get through the failure and travel to the point in their learning where they develop new skills, i.e. they have learned the material/skill.

One way to do this is to tell them about your own failures in life. Make sure you do not send a wrong message. It is important that they understand that your failure was a stepping stone to success, not that you gave up.

Don't overpraise. Make sure they understand that we all have different talents and that not everyone can win an award.

2. Make learning an activity that you and your children enjoy.

If learning is a chore we avoid it, it is human nature. If we like something, we are more likely to be committed to doing it. So if your children enjoy learning, then it becomes easier for them to succeed. Making learning interesting and fun is so important.

3. Allow your children to do what they love.

By following their passion they are committing themselves to a course of action that they love. As parents and guardians we can worry with 'What ifs...' For instance, Sandra has a

daughter who loves dance. Debbie is 14 years old and lives and breathes dance. Sandra is very supportive but worries 'What if she is not good enough?' Maybe Debbie won't be good enough but the time to deal with that is when Debbie comes to that realisation and that is not yet. But what if she IS good enough? What then? Maybe she could become a professional dancer and be on Strictly? Who knows?

4. Make academic subjects relevant to your children.

Children often find it difficult to see the relevance of a subject for their lives. There is one stock answer; to be an educated adult you need a base level of knowledge. You need to be numerate (yes, maths is vital) and you need to be literate and knowledgeable about literature and history and geography and in fact everything they study at school. This is the base or bottom level of knowledge that successful men and women need to have as their launch pad into the adult world.

5. Involve games in learning as much as possible

Children love games. They are born hard-wired to play and will respond and learn much more quickly. Board games and strategy games are excellent in developing thinking skills.

Children's self-esteem builds when they succeed and games help them to do so.

6. Develop your children's motivation by consequences not punishment. Children need to learn that actions have consequences. It is important at the decision point that your children learn to understand that the outcomes are a consequence of their choices. If they want better or different outcomes they need to look at their choices.

7. Deepen your children's depth of processing

You will find that maths has changed since you were at school. Maths teachers now talk of deep thinking. Look at your children's school work with them and learn to draw mind maps. Mind mapping is a study skill process and is one way of increasing what is known as depth of processing. Take a look at *The Mind Map* a book by Tony Buzan.

8. Teach your children to switch off and relax

There are 2 skills that are needed to be successful, focus and endeavour. But we also need to learn how to switch off at the right times. Children can and do get stressed just like adults. They need at least 2 sessions of physical activity every week to deal with stress.

9. Allow your children safe access to the internet.

We have spoken about this elsewhere, so will not cover much here. Suffice to say that the internet is full of great learning activities. Keep the computer in a public space NOT in your child's room. This helps you to monitor what they are doing and what they see. Make sure you use in built protection or get a protection tool: it is vital.

10. Personal time out

Allow them time off. It is vital for their sense of well-being that they have at least one evening per week where they are in charge of what happens to them. They need the space to organise at least some of their own time; that allows them to take control and helps them to develop a sense of responsibility.

These are 10 simple tips but they are so powerful that when a parent and child follow them, it is virtually impossible not to learn!