

# Embrace and Learn from Mistakes and Challenges



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by Erik Youngman, Guest Blogger

Regardless of your children's age and where you live, there are daily opportunities to help children embrace and learn from mistakes and challenges. Teachers and parents have an important shared responsibility and opportunity to model and empower critical skills to children. Children make progress when teachers and parents model and empower learning from mistakes and challenges with a growth mindset. Progress and change are dependent upon specific skills that are required and improved while learning with a growth mindset and become even more important as expectations and rigor increase.

## Embrace and Learn from Mistakes

Small and large, meaningful and meaningless, as well as impactless and impactful mistakes occur hourly, daily, and weekly. Reactions, support, feedback, and

consequences impact the ownership, changes, and improvement. Rather than focusing on unrealistic perfection and the extremes associated with quitting and failure, help children expect and learn from mistakes.

Example mistakes that parents can help with include not being ready to leave the house on time for school, not completing chores, cleaning a spill in the kitchen, arriving late, or disagreements with others. Example mistakes that teachers can help children learn from include submitting late homework, inappropriate recess behavior, or not following rules.

## Embrace and Learn from Challenges

Children encounter challenges while learning, competing, performing, and collaborating. Example challenges that parents can help children cope with include learning to tie shoes; learning a new skill such as budgeting money, riding a bike, or how to drive a car; or being anxious about being selected or rejected for a role in a play or a specific team they tried out for. Example challenges that teachers can help children with include overcoming frustration with a challenging math problem or not knowing where to start when creating a large project, misunderstanding a new concept they are learning about, or learning a new language or musical instrument. A common example challenge for everyone is learning new technology. Do you read directions, ask for guidance, or tinker to learn and unlearn new technology features and capabilities? Your children are listening, watching, emulating, or hopefully sometimes teaching you.

Children can learn how to embrace and learn from challenges by understanding benefits of:

Seeking challenges

Enhancing execution, specificity, quantity, and/or consistency

Strengthening connections with other topics

Being vulnerable and taking calculated risks

Increasing speed of progress

Taking ownership for independent and group growth

Asking the correct questions at the correct time to the correct people

Self-assessing, self-regulating, and self-advocating

Thinking like a beginner

Learning from and be inspired by feedback and models

Sharing with a larger or more authentic audience

Regardless if there are mistakes or challenges, parents and teachers can help children understand options to consider when they are not successful YET.

Reread information or directions

Identify a different strategy

Pause, take a deep breath, be kind to yourself, and try again

Explain your challenge to someone

Review the primary goal and/or an example

Make connections to similar information

View your challenge from a different perspective

Enhance your focus and/or effort

Research additional options to guide your planning

Learn from challenges, mistakes or misunderstandings

# Skills That Help Children Embrace and Learn From Mistakes and Challenges

Rather than specific solutions, Let's reflect about general skills and mindsets that enhance positive outcomes. Let's also think about the amplified impact when parents and teachers

take ownership by admitting and apologizing and then move forward while learning. Growth mindset skills that enhance learning from mistakes and challenges can be categorized into four dimensions: solving problems, agency, collaborating, and communicating.

## Solving Problems

Parents and teachers can empower children to solve problems effectively as they embrace and learn from mistakes and challenges rather than being afraid of feeling uncomfortable, self-conscious, or embarrassed. Problem-solving skills that should be learned and improved include strategizing, resourcefulness, reflection, adaptability, creativity, calculated risk-taking, and questioning. Parents and teachers can enhance these skills by providing support as children design, construct, experiment, investigate, examine, revise, solve, critique, and assess in different situations. Children should also be taught empathy and gratitude to help them make connections between the positive impacts of preparation on the success of themselves and others.

# Agency

Parents and teachers can empower autonomy, agency, ownership, self-direction, and a growth mindset as they embrace and learn from mistakes and challenges. Topics to discuss include:

- Passionately, responsibly, and inspirationally doing your best

- Reflecting about continuous improvement and development

- Courageously embracing challenges, resiliently learning from mistakes and feedback, and humbly celebrating incremental progress

- Resourcefully, curiously, and creatively, problem-solving, adapting, and discovering

- Reflecting, setting goals, and self-assessing

- Self-regulating effort, motivation, ownership, and self-talk

- Focusing on what you can control

- Helping, teaching, supporting, motivating, empowering, and coaching others

# Collaborating

Parents and teachers can empower children to effectively collaborate as they embrace and learn from mistakes and challenges. Helpful topics to model and discuss the benefits of include relationships, team contributions and success, inspiration from the progress of others, building and maintaining trust, or helping and receiving help from support networks.

Parents and teachers should empower collaboration, helping others, and shared ownership rather than competition by:

- Providing opportunities to help, provide feedback, listen, compliment, and share
- Making time for individual and team goal setting and monitoring
- Modeling and empowering two-way communication
- Establishing clear purpose and expectations
- Modeling and empowering being coachable and teachable
- Learning from mistakes and guidance of others
- Leveraging technology collaboration tools
- Creating engaging discussion opportunities
- Rewarding effective teamwork

Parents and teachers should also empower others to learn with a growth mindset by:

- Curiously asking deliberate questions
- Discussing motivating topics with others
- Modeling, demonstrating, or sharing an example
- Empathetically cheering for others
- Encouraging a teammate or classmate to learn from a mistake, challenge, or misunderstanding
- Evaluating others and providing encouraging feedback
- Helping others see a positive perspective
- Listening to others and then helping motivate
- Proudly sharing with a larger audience
- Modeling and empowering reflective resilience

# Communicating

Parents and teachers can empower children to communicate effectively as they embrace and learn from mistakes and challenges. Help children listen to and share feedback; explain difficulties and potential strategies; ask questions and for assistance; and effectively communicate, assist, and lead others.

## Application

Connecting back to the example of teaching children the complex challenge of driving a car can be a closing example that applies growth mindset recommendations and the four dimensions of solving problems, agency, collaboration, and communicating. Teaching your children to drive (your car) can guide effective learning discussions at home and in the classroom.

- Provide understandable directions in advance

- Ask questions

- Build confidence and resilience with positive compliments about effort, attitude, and focus

- Share specific and constructive feedback during the learning process

You can start applying information from this blog by Identifying two mistakes or challenges that you will discuss with children to empower improvement. Guide your conversations with one or two of the dimensions discussed. What am I missing here? What would you add? How are you empowering students to learn from mistakes and challenges with a growth mindset? I would love to

hear updates, feedback, and questions via Twitter (@Erik\_Youngman) so we can continue reflective conversations. Please also share this blog with another parent or teacher so you can collaboratively discuss this topic to ultimately help children.

## Dr. Erik Youngman's Biography

Dr. Erik Youngman is an education leader who is passionate about topics such as homework, growth mindset, grading, and leadership. Published books he has written include, "The Magic of Growth Mindset," and "12 Characteristics of Deliberate Homework," as well as a chapter for, "100 No-Nonsense Things That All Teachers Should Stop Doing." Erik has also written numerous blogs about growth mindset and grading.

This is his twenty-first year in educational leadership. Erik is the Assistant Superintendent for Libertyville District 70 in Libertyville, Illinois. Previous education experiences include being a principal in Libertyville as well as an assistant principal and teacher in Gurnee, Illinois.

Erik earned a Doctorate in Educational Leadership, Education Specialist Degree, and Master of Science in Education from Northern Illinois University and a Bachelor of Arts from Augustana College. Please follow and contact Erik via Twitter [@Erik\\_Youngman](#) or his website: [ErikYoungman.com](#)