

Pointers For Parents

Optimism Is Important For Children— Here's How To Help Them Develop It ㊦

(NAPSA)—Optimism is a powerful skill that can help children be resilient in the face of problems or adversity and increase their overall happiness. Research shows that children can strengthen their optimism through a set of learned skills.

As part of a commitment to helping children realize their full potential by promoting a healthy lifestyle, the Pepperidge Farm Goldfish brand has partnered with Karen Reivich Ph.D., an expert in the field of positive psychology in children and mother of four, to encourage optimism in America's youth. The program is called Fishful Thinking and aims to inform parents and teachers about the importance of optimism in childhood development. It offers tips and tools, like the ones below, to help them easily incorporate optimism into children's daily lives in a fun way.

Create collages that illustrate feelings. Being able to identify and describe what you are feeling and what others are feeling is a building block of a healthy emotional life.

Pick a feeling (e.g., happy, angry or frustrated) and work with your child to make a collage that illustrates that feeling. Use pictures from magazines, photos, drawings or words to illustrate what that feeling is like for your child. Paste the pictures on one piece of paper and discuss with your child situations that made him or her feel that way. Resist the temptation to challenge the feeling or problem-solve. Instead, just empathize with your child by saying something like, "Yes, it would make me mad, too."

What would you do? The experience of being in control of

your world is known as mastery and is a fundamental component of resilience. It is critical for success and well-being. Children who believe they have control are more likely to feel happy and experience less anxiety.

Give your child, your spouse and yourself a stack of index cards. Have each person write down an ethical dilemma or problem. Take turns choosing a card and sharing how you would handle the situation. It is important not to criticize your child's decision, but it is good to ask questions: What makes that a good decision from your perspective? What do you think would happen next? The goal of the game is not to find the "right" answer, but to give your child the opportunity to practice making decisions and build his or her confidence as well as the ability to think things through and problem-solve.

Take beauty detours. Focusing on the sensations of a positive experience—like the taste of a delicious piece of cake, or the feel of a warm bath—requires paying close attention with your senses and requires that you slow down, so that you can fully appreciate the experience.

Once a week, take a five-minute beauty detour with your child. The goal of the detour is to use the five minutes to notice something beautiful or inspiring that you would not normally have noticed. For example, drive down streets you don't normally take. Stop on the side of the road and notice something beautiful about the trees, houses or the sky.

For more information and downloadable content, including easy tips and activities for building optimism from Karen Reivich, Ph.D., visit www.fishfulthinking.com.