

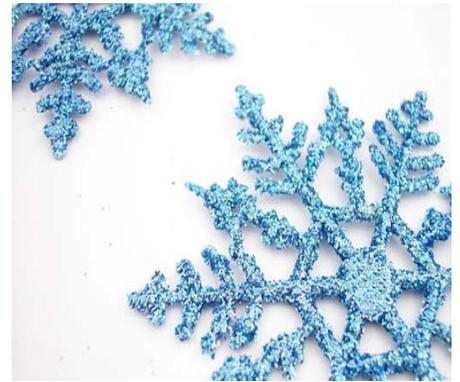
Social and Emotional Connections

January/February 2018

Center for Creative Learning

During our second year, the CCL Character Education Committee is continuing to focus on Social Emotional Learning (SEL). We are infusing SEL into our daily curriculum and interactions with students at the Center for Creative Learning. In order to build strong connections between home and school, this monthly newsletter contains activities and ideas you can try at home to promote social and emotional growth with your children.

Share your experiences with these activities and we will feature what you are doing at home in the next month's newsletter. Pictures and stories are great!



If you have any questions or would like more information, please feel free to contact:

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Frustration

Benefits of Frustration

Parents of bright children sometimes have unrealistic expectations about their child excelling in school with ease. However, even a gifted child doesn't always know how to get started on a research project, or sometimes they don't do as well on a test as expected. Sometimes they assume they already know what the teacher is explaining and just don't fully listen. Then, when it's time to tackle the assignment, it's not so easy. Frustration sets in.

Think Long-term

Often a child's expectations about smooth sailing in school are unrealistic and can be harmful. Children who don't learn to deal constructively with frustration when challenged develop habits that may limit them. On the other hand, children who learn to persist through their frustrations develop grit. Research shows grit is a necessary quality for high level academic success. Below are strategies that may help your child transform frustrations into success.

Approach Your Child's Frustration as a Teachable Moment

- Remain calm. Speak very matter-of-factly. Your calmness will help your child achieve their own sense of calm. Reacting emotionally yourself may intensify their feelings and make it more difficult for you to help them learn from a challenging experience.
- Paraphrase. Repeat back your understanding of what occurred and the feelings your child seems to be experiencing. Paraphrasing will help objectively clarify the situation for both you and your child.
- Ask specific questions that can't be answered with one word or short phrase. "What happened when you...? How did you feel when...?"
- Help your child reframe the event. Focus on the process and the need for perseverance. It isn't about one paper, one test, one project, or one crashed robot. It's about acquiring both the intellectual skills and the character traits necessary for long term success.
- Help your child right-size their expectations. What constitutes success? What is a reasonable goal given the timeline, other course work, and their extra-curricular activities? It's important to work hard to achieve the outcome an endeavor deserves, but a child can't expect perfection with every endeavor.
- Encourage your child to identify possible solutions on their own. Be willing to help them brainstorm and consider possible options going forward, but don't hand out solutions. Approach this as an opportunity to help your child develop some problem-solving skills as well as a long-term perspective. That's far more important than coming up with "the right" solution.
- Explain that achievements which are sometimes the hardest to obtain turn out to be the ones we value the most. They did not come easily and we had to truly work to achieve them.
- Help your child understand why a teacher continues to question them for more information or won't rescue them by giving out answers. Explain that the teacher is actually expressing confidence that they can overcome their frustration, resolve the obstacles that hold them back, and manage to succeed on their own.
- Praise and encourage your child for trying, always keeping the focus on the efforts they make rather than ability or results. Make it clear that you value your child's perseverance, even if the results aren't perfect or the game isn't won.

Arrange for Your Child to Experience Frustration

- Work with the teacher to develop some special challenges for your child if school assignments are too easy or, develop challenges together with your child. Tasks that require persistence over time, are especially valuable. Could your child do some research and write a play about life in ancient Greece? Could they write a history of the Civil War from the perspective of a southern slave, or the wife of a soldier killed at Gettysburg? Could they design and build a “moon rover”?
- Involve your child in activities like team sports or clubs where they may not necessarily excel and where winning and losing are part of the growth process, part of the fun. This will help your child become more well-rounded, develop social skills, and experience the frustration of not always being the best.
- Make your values explicit. Explain that learning to work hard and continuing to try when success does not come instantly are important for success in school and in life. Give examples from your own experience.

In conclusion, frustration need not be avoided. Helping your child turn frustration into persistent effort will develop both self-confidence and grit, character traits essential to long-term success.



Dennis O'Brien is a licensed clinical social worker, experienced educator and therapist, who has led five nonprofits. He has written educational materials used by the Washington University School of Medicine Dept. of Psychiatry, weekly columns on parenting for the Suburban Journal/Post-Dispatch and numerous columns for St. Louis Moms and Dads, CHARACTERplus, Family Connection (Mo. Dept. of Mental Health) and Gifted Association of Missouri. O'Brien's April 6 column, "Prevent teen suicide by addressing it," won the 2010 Missouri Institute of Mental Health award for outstanding reporting on suicide.

This month's information comes from an article that can be found on page 4 of the newsletter at the following link.

<https://www.giftedresourcecouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/mwf15.pdf>