



THE EAP CONNECTION

SETTING EXPECTATIONS WITH YOUR CHILDREN

As parents, we love our children and want the best for them. We worry about them a lot, and often our worries are focused around whether our children are hitting targeted behaviors or expectations set forth for them. However, sometimes the expectations we hold can produce conflict in the home if our expectations are beyond what is reasonable for our child's abilities, or if our expectations spill over into unreasonable pressure on our children. So how can we accurately estimate our children's actual abilities, and better yet, how can we set high expectations and help our kids reach their potential without causing unnecessary anxiety and conflict? Below are a few helpful tips for setting expectations with your children.

1. Adopt a growth mindset.

A growth mindset involves focusing on the value of the process that goes into things rather than the outcome. With a growth mindset, you will have high expectations around the effort that goes into something rather than the outcome, whereas a fixed mindset puts more emphasis on the outcome, such as a final grade or whether your child has reached a certain mile marker. You can support a growth mindset in your children by emphasizing the importance of hard work, which is the key to good grades, and also is something of value in and of itself.

2. Make expectations clear, realistic, and reasonable.

Many kids become overwhelmed by pressure because they don't know exactly what is expected of them. Their parents want them to do well at school, but what does this mean? *To get good grades? To be at the top of the class? To acquire knowledge and skills?* Set achievable expectations for your kids and make sure they know exactly what they are, and how you expect them to achieve them. This places the focus on the process, rather than outcome. Clear high expectation: *'I expect you to study for at least one hour a day.'*

3. Let your children make mistakes.

Kids might seek out help from you with their assignments when they're feeling stressed, or as parents of little ones, we may be quick to say, 'let me do that for you.' But it's important to remember that kids are growing, and we want them to develop the competencies necessary to independently fulfill their milestones and obligations. By helping them too much, you can send the message that your expectations for them are low and your belief in their growth is minimal. Even if your child does struggle, 'failure' is an inevitable part of life and a critical part of learning. By understanding that from a young age, kids grow to be motivated by their mistakes, to discover where they went wrong, to learn from those experiences, and to strive to do something different in the future—on their own.

4. Offer support and encouragement through the process.

Let your kids know that you have faith in their ability, that you believe they are confident and capable, and that hard work is what's needed to get good results. This could mean offering them a sympathetic ear when they're feeling stressed or listening to them go over what they learned in school over dinner. It may mean helping them problem solve or supporting them when they are feeling disappointed that they made a mistake or failed at something. All in all, the best emotional and practical support you can offer your child is during the process, not after the outcome, and acknowledging to them that you see both their potential and their effort in the process.

HOW TO USE YOUR EAP BENEFIT:

ERC: Counselors & Consultants is your company's Employee Assistance Program (EAP) provider. For additional information, visit our website ERCincorp.com or call 1-800-222-8590.