

Teach Your Child How To Set Goals...And Reach Them!

Kids want to change the world. That's great—but they can be frustrated when it doesn't happen right away. Your job is to help your child choose a goal that can be reached. He/She can't eliminate world hunger, but he/she can work at a soup kitchen or help the needy.

The best goals are those that make children stretch, reach and grow—but are within their sights. Choosing a goal that is impossible to achieve will defeat your child before he/she begins.

How to Achieve Goals

1. Write the goal. Post it where your child can see it. Psychologists say that people are nearly three times as committed to goals they write down as they are to goals they carry in their heads. Writing a goal will help remind your child each day of his ultimate objective.
2. Brainstorm strategies to reach the goal. Once your child has selected a goal, it's time to help your child think of ways to break it down to smaller, achievable parts. For example, if his/her goal is to improve his spelling grade, he/she might:
 - a. Divide the list of words into several smaller lists of just a few words each. Study just one list until that list is mastered. Then go on to the next list.
 - b. Try spelling the words aloud using the "one small list at a time" technique.
 - c. Try correctly using each spelling word in a sentence.
 - d. Ask family members to give practice tests on a few or all of the words.
3. Check progress. As your child completes each small step, praise his/her effort. If your child gets off track, help him/her to refocus.
4. Look for lessons in both success and failure. Did your child reach his/her goal? Why or why not? What can be learned from your child's success or failure that could help him/her in the future?
5. Celebrate progress...and set another goal. Each time your child reaches a goal, he/she is building their self-esteem.

Be a Cheerleader for Your Child

Here are some encouraging things to tell your child while he/she is working toward a goal:

- Practice makes perfect. Let your child know that effort is important and that it will pay off in the end.
- We're all on the same team. Remind your child that together you are working toward the same goal—your child's success.
- Help keep score. Make sure your child sees the results of hard work.



Avoid Your Own Unrealistic Expectations

If your child consistently fails to meet your expectations, it may not be your child's fault. You may need to change what you expect. Here are some questions to ask yourself:

- Why do I have this expectation?
- What purpose does it serve?
- Is this expectation based on my needs or my child's? (What's in it for me?)
- Is it realistic to expect this of a child this age, temperament and background?