

Setbacks, Flexibility, and Bouncing Back



Setbacks can be painful and confusing to navigate as an adult, so kids experiencing setbacks for the first time may need some extra support. Positive interactions can help them avoid more anger, disappointment, frustration, and confusion. It can be an opportunity to help them build flexible thinking and coping skills, and make it easier for them to handle the next setback.

Your child may benefit from therapy if you answer “yes” to any of the questions below.

- Is your child showing signs of rigidity (difficulties with change)?
- Does your child have an intense reaction to losing or not meeting expectations?
- Does your child have a hard time managing their emotions or engage in negative self-talk, when they experience disappointment?
- Does your child show signs of **depression**?

You may benefit from parent coaching if you answer “yes” to any of the questions below.

- Do you have a hard time allowing your child to make mistakes, or do you feel the need to step in and “fix” everything so your child won’t become upset or experience failure?
- Are you interested in helping your child become more adaptable to change?
- Would you like to learn how to support your child when they’re feeling overwhelmed?

Therapy and or coaching can help

Therapy can help children of all ages by showing them how setbacks and failures can be used as opportunities to learn and grow stronger.

Coaching can give caregivers new ways to help children handle setbacks, from reframing thoughts to creative expression.

Supporting your kids

Here are some things to keep in mind when supporting children going through a setback:

- Talk about the experience by validating their feelings and help to reframe negative thinking to a more positive mindset. Ex. "Let's think about the pros and cons of stopping an activity when we feel frustrated"
- Ask how they would support others in the same situation. Ex. "What would you say to your friend who was sad about making the same mistake?"
- Make it a habit to discuss setbacks and talk about positive learnings and changeable actions versus the permanent ones.
- Practice making mistakes. Allow your child to make mistakes intentionally to discover how to use coping skills to adjust and adapt. This then will be useful for when the time comes unintentionally.

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Chris C. a member of Spring Health has been working with Terry Manrique, a Spring Health parent/relationship coach. Chris shared,

"Working with Terry as my parenting coach has been so productive and helpful in teaching me new skills and techniques to find a parenting approach that works. My stress level and feeling of parental helplessness were high prior to working with her. The outcome has been an overall healthier mindset and relationship with my child."

A Special-Needs Perspective:

While these talking points can apply to all children, kids with special needs may face more challenges and therefore have more experience with setbacks or struggles with their confidence. Model disappointment. Talk through your thinking process." If I think about a problem in a certain way I get discouraged, but if I ask myself, is this a big or small impact, is it forever or temporary, it can solve the problem."

- Help your child stay away from catastrophizing thinking (predicting the worst). Ask "What is the worst that could happen? "How can we help prevent that?" "What will most likely happen?" And "What will we do if that does happen?"
- Review your child's successes and handlings of when things don't go well on a daily basis, to build confidence and perseverance.

Get support

If your child is having a hard time with feelings of defeat or disappointment, you might consider trying a therapy session to help them process their feelings. Coaching is also available for parents.

Sign in to schedule a session, or learn more about how Spring Health can support you: benefits@springhealth.

