



*Fostering Resilience*  
 in Your Struggling Child or Teen

A Strengths & Values-Based Approach




**Resilience**  
 [ri-zil-yuh-ns, ri-zil-ee-uh-ns], noun

1. The power or ability to return to the original form, position after being bent, compressed, or stretched.
2. The ability to recover readily from adversity, illness, or the like.




**“Al”**

- Born the youngest of 7 children.
- Early on, he loved to learn.
- As soon as he could talk, he began to ask his parents and everyone else an endless list of questions.
- Al asked so many “whys”, “wheres” and “whats” that his father said he often felt exhausted.
- His mother was more patient.



**“Al”**

- He was of a decidedly mischievous bent.
- He was forever falling into scrapes.
- At six years of age, he set a little fire inside the barn “just to see what it would do.”
- It burned the barn to the ground.



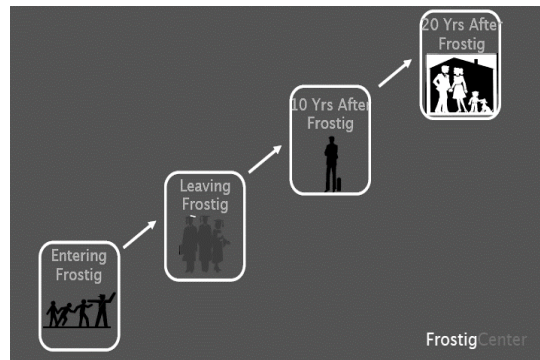
# "Al"

- He started school with "high hopes."
- His first teacher said Al's mind was "always confused."
- Al argued that, to learn, he needed to "do things" or "make things" himself rather than have them "forced upon him."
- Luckily, his next teacher (his mother) recognized his potential and his need to learn in a different way.



## Thomas Alva "Al" Edison

Extremely Resilient  
Dyslexic  
& ADHD  
Genius



### Frostig center study

20 year study of adults with learning and attention disorders.

FrostigCenter



### Success Attributes

- Self-Awareness
- Proactivity
- Perseverance
- Goal Setting
- Support Systems
- Emotional Coping Strategies

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**Self Awareness**

Awareness and acceptance of

- Strengths
- Needs

**Recognize Your Child or Teen’s Strengths**

**VIA Survey of Character Strengths**

- On-line questionnaire shows top 5 of 24 character strengths.
  - <http://www.authentic happiness.sas.upenn.edu/default.aspx>
- To learn more about your child’s strengths, go to
  - <https://www.viacharacter.org/character-strengths>



**Be a “Strength Detective”**

Become a “strength detective” to help your child or teen identify talents, abilities, and positive qualities.

Make a list of ways she has used her talents in the past.

# Be a "Strength Detective"

- Identify contributions to others.
- Praise for talents must be genuine and truly recognizable.



# Recognize hidden strengths

- Distracted = Creativity
- Daydreaming = Imagination
- Impulsive = Curious
- Stubborn = Determined
- Poor Planning = Spontaneous
- Disorganized = Flexible



# Honor Past Achievements

- Create a "Wall of Honor" for trophies, medals, ribbons, and certificates of achievement.

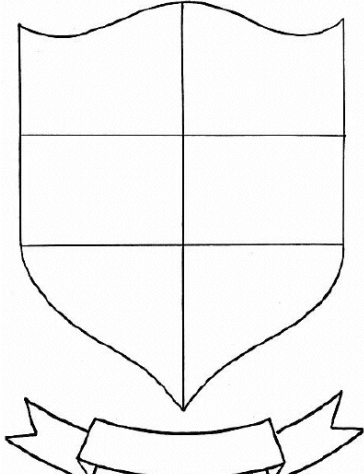
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## Coat of Arms

In Europe, the coat of arms told others about your:  
 Beliefs  
 Past Struggles  
 Achievements





**MAKE A Coat of Arms**

Detail:  
 Character Qualities  
 Talents  
 Successes  
 Dreams for the future


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## Make Time for Strengths

- Making time to demonstrate strengths is just as important as making time to address weaknesses.
- Emphasizing talents enables learning to use skills to help overcome challenges.



**Assure and Affirm**

Affirm that she is smart and she has great potential.

Next, tell her that all children and all adults have strengths and weaknesses.

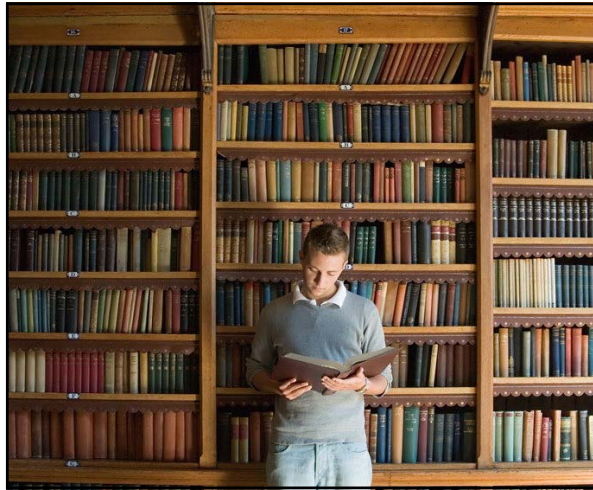
Recognize her strengths



**Assure and Affirm**

Identify his needs and give them a name.

Assure him that you, his teachers, & others can and will help him improve his skills.



**Books, Videos, Websites**

Improve Awareness  
 Help to Improve, Adapt, or Adjust to Challenges.  
 Emphasize Strengths.  
 Tell about successful people who have similar challenges.


## Change “Special Needs” to “Feeling Special”

Once an individual understands

- she is smart,
- she has a number of talents,
- and her learning problems can be addressed, then...  
 she can start to accept herself.

## With Self-Awareness

One becomes less hard on himself emotionally...



Over time, he becomes tougher on himself to learn from his mistakes and achieve personal goals.

Success Attributes


- Self-Awareness
- **Proactivity**
- Perseverance
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**A Proactive Problem Solver**

“When I have fully decided that a result is worth getting, I go ahead of it and make trial after trial until it comes.”



**Keys to Proactivity**


- Learning from mistakes
- Problem Solving
- Decision Making



**Help Your Child/Teen Learn from Mistakes**

Ask yourself two tough questions:


- What does my child see or hear when I make a mistake?
- What do I do or say when my child makes a mistake?



**Help Your Child/Teen Learn from Mistakes**

Next, ask yourself:

- How can I become a better model of learning from mistakes?
- How can I teach my child to learn from mistakes?

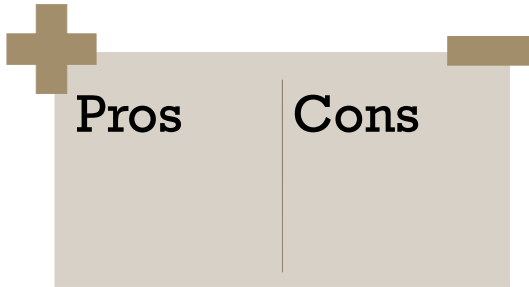


# Develop Good Problem Solving

- What's the Problem?
- What's Causing the Problem?
- What Can You Change about the Problem?
- How Can You Can Your Focus?
- How Can You Change Your Thoughts?
- How Can You Change Your Response?
- What is Your Best Plan?



# Develop Good Decision Making



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"Well, so far, I've found 10,000 ways it doesn't work."


- Thomas Edison







**Thomas Alva Edison**

"One of the great essentials to achieve anything worthwhile is stick-to-itivness."




### Foster and Fire Motivation

- Ask yourself, "What fires my child or teen's motivation?"
- Take immediate steps to motivate her to success.

### Motivation: No "One Size Fits All"


- It is important to identify what motivates your child or teen.
- Research has identified the best ways to motivate children and teens, however...
- Each individual has a different set of motivations that drive his or her performance.



- **Rewards** can include money, things, grades, awards, trophies, and praise
- **Punishment** involves the loss of either things or attention (time-out, grounding).

**External Motivation**

*Motivation comes from external rewards or punishment to drive action or behavior.*



## Using Effective Rewards

- Effective rewards should reflect a parent's recognition and appreciation for efforts, improvements, and accomplishments.
- Rewards are effective when it is clear that a specific action or behavior results in a specific reward.
- Rewards are most effective if your child or teen has some input about the rewards she will receive.



## Using Effective Rewards

- At first, rewards may need to be fairly **immediate** to reinforce behavior changes.
- Over time, **intermittent, "surprise" rewards** can be more effective and less likely to result in "reward obsession."
- Over even more time, parents can begin to **acknowledge** progress through specific praise without a material reward.
- Eventually, mastering a particular behavior can become **self-reinforcing**.



## Praise

- **Praising efforts and improvements** results in more learning and more resilience in the face of failure.
- **Provide specific examples and incidents** that illustrate his effort and progress .
- In the moment, **recognize when he is doing what you expect**.
- **Avoid praising for "smarts" or "good work"** as this can result in less effort on challenging tasks for fear of failure.

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## Punishment

- ***In the short-term punishment can be effective for some children and teens.***
- Losing privileges (including electronics, driving rights, etc.) can be effective in the short term.
- Done properly, time-out or grounding can be effective for some children and teens in the short run.
- ***In the long run, very few people are truly motivated to take action because of the threat or thought of losing things or attention.***



- **Relatedness:** feeling connected to others or cared for in some way as a result of actions and behaviors.
- **Independence:** being able to complete tasks on one’s own terms.
- **Purpose:** understanding and agreeing with the purpose (value) of a task or behavior.
- **Mastery:** getting better and better at a task or behavior.

**Internal Motivation**

*Motivation comes from the built-in satisfaction of the activity itself.*

## Relatedness

*The child or teen motivated by relatedness has a strong need to be connected with others one-to-one, in groups, and on teams.*

- Have her think about the relationships that motivate her. Ask, “What is it about those relationships that is motivating?”
- Unfortunately, she will have teachers and other people in her life that she doesn’t feel connected to. In these situations ask her, “How might you be able to create motivation by substituting a relationship you are motivated by?”

## Relatedness

- Help her recognize who she enjoys being around even in the classroom of the teacher she can’t connect with.
- Allow your child or teen to study for tests with another student she enjoys being around. Teach them to use elaboration skills where they connect what they already know to what they are learning by figuring out why the new information makes sense.

## Independence

*The child or teen motivated by independence wants to complete tasks and change behavior on his or her own terms.*

- When it comes to homework, some independent students get stuck on the wrong autonomy question: “Do I have to do the homework?”
- Redirect her away from this debate, and toward the conditions under which she does her homework.
- Identify opportunities for her to choose how she does the homework.

## Independence

- Give her responsibility: leave her in charge on occasion.
- Make him responsible for age-appropriate tasks: taking phone messages, taking care of younger siblings, or starting dinner.
- Grant her some authority, and be sure and commend and thank her when she does well.
- Emphasize the responsibility involved in completing homework.



## Purpose

*This child or teen is driven to perform tasks that have a clear purpose that he or she values.*

- Sometimes, it's hard see the purpose for homework or other tasks.
- Put up pictures of his team where he does his homework to remind him of eligibility requirements.
- Put up pictures of the college she wants to attend or the branch of military she wants to join where she does homework.



## Connect Purpose to Values

- Ask your child or teen, "Tell me what you care about in life. What matters most to you? What are the goals or values you try to live your life by?"
- Teach her to consider ways her most important values might motivate her to complete task.
- Completing homework without reminders allows her to remain independent.
- Cleaning her room can be reframed as "providing an inviting place for friends to hang-out."



## Mastery

*The child or teen driven by mastery has a strong desire to get better and better at tasks or behaviors.*

- Although this motivation is easy to apply to sports and other activities, it can be harder to apply to learning.
- Remind your older student how she has mastered reading, and remind her she can master anything she sets her mind to.
- Remind younger students how role models have mastered their learning challenges to succeed.




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**Thomas Alva Edison**

Goal Achiever

"I never did anything by accident, nor did any of my inventions come by accident; they came by work."




**SETTING & Achieving Goals**

Individuals with learning difficulties benefit from structure in setting and achieving goals.

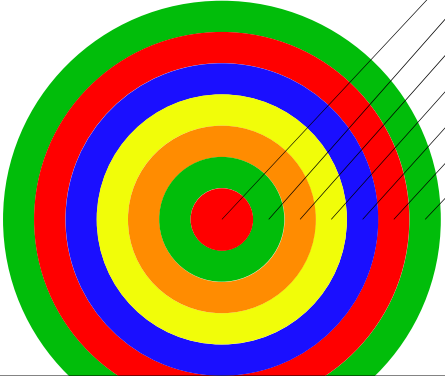



**Achieving Goals**


Reduces the lack of control many with learning challenges feel.



### Achieving Goals



1. Identify the Goal
2. Identify Benefits
3. Identify Obstacles
4. Identify Skills Needed
5. Identify Individuals
6. Develop Action Plan
7. Set Completion Date



Visualize your Goals!

- Schedule time on a regular basis to work on goals.
- Check off actions as they're accomplished!
- Plan to make adjustments to the plan.
- Celebrate Small & Big Successes!


**JUST DO IT!**

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**Seek Support**

Establish a Support Network early...

So you can quickly identify who to contact when a problem or question arises.




**Supportive Educators**

Help Build Skills

Affirm Attempts

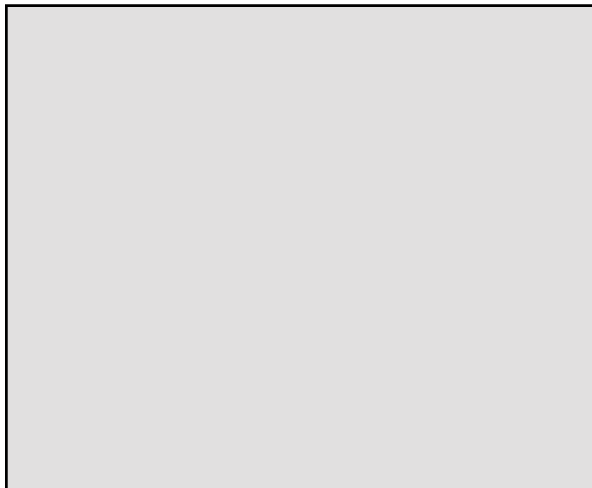
Reward Improvements



**Classroom Accommodations**

Flexibility of accommodations for weaknesses in learning.

Teach when and how to ask for help.



**Support Groups**

Look for groups that allow you to:


- Interact with others who are struggling with similar difficulties
- Better understand challenges
- Learn how to improve skills.

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## Self-talk

- What we think of our selves is a result of what we say to ourselves.
- “Self-talk” is what a child, teen, or adult thinks to himself whenever he is faced with something difficult.
- A child, teen with learning problems often experiences negative self-talk about the negative impact of symptoms.




## Self-Talk Can Be Changed!



Parents and Teachers can take practical steps to change a child's negative self-talk.

Martin Seligman, Ph.D.  
University of Pennsylvania  
Penn Resilience Project



## Changing self-talk

- Adversity
- Beliefs
- Consequences
- Defense
- Energized Expectations





### First, Identify the ABC's

- **A**dversity (Problem)
- **B**eliefs (Thought)
- **C**onsequences (Feeling & Action)



### "Adversity"



I understood the information when my teacher explained it...  
  
but I failed the test!



### "Beliefs"



*"I can't read."  
"I'm stupid!"*

*"I might as well not try to understand the material...I'm a total failure."*



### "Consequences"



I feel sad and worried.

I give up trying.



### A-B-C-D-E spells...SUCCESS!

Next, Teach Your Child or Teen to:

- **DISPUTE** Negative Beliefs
- **ENERGIZE** Expectations!



### “Dispute” Negative Beliefs



Look for evidence...

*“Although I struggle with reading, I am able to understand science when it’s read to me or when I listen to an audio book.”*



### “Energize” Expectations



Identify new beliefs & positive impacts on expectations.


*“With the right kind of support, I’m sure I’ll make an A on our next science exam”*



### Thomas Alva Edison

A Model to Us All  
“Our greatest weakness lies in giving up. The most certain way to succeed is always to try just one more time.”







Raising a struggling child or teen is hard work.

**Remember...**

"When you think have exhausted all possibilities, remember this - you haven't."



**YOU CAN CHANGE YOUR CHILD OR TEEN'S TRAJECTORY IN LIFE!**



**IT'S WORTH ALL THE EFFORT WHEN YOU CAN LOOK BACK AND SAY,**

**"MY CHILD WHO STRUGGLED....**

**HAS GATHERED STRENGTH FROM ME."**



*Questions? Answers!*

<https://www.drmontedavenport.com/GC-READ>