



CARE SKILL No. 6

Strengths in Action – Building Confidence in One's Abilities

"If you don't believe you can do it, believe that I believe you can do it." –Anonymous.

Goal: Have fun with children and each other daily; notice, highlight, and build on strengths; notice when children are giving it a go; and provide opportunities for children and young people to experience success.

Video: https://www.ted.com/talks/carol_dweck_the_power_of_believing_that_you_can_improve?utm_campaign=tedsread&utm_medium=referral&utm_source=tedcomshare

Many of the children, young people and families we work with have experienced complex trauma. Exposure to complex trauma can often lead to intense feelings of inadequacy, low self-esteem, and poor confidence/self-worth. Our role is to help children and young people overcome and heal from the impact of complex trauma. To do that, we must create opportunities for children, young people and families to:

- Experience successes in their day-to-day life
- Recognise their areas of strength
- Build new areas of strength or competency and
- Feel good about their accomplishments.

Having success in one area can be a powerful motivation to take risks and try harder in other areas. *Success motivates success.*

Strategies

Have fun with children, young people and each other

When we fill our daily routines with opportunities to have positive experiences and enjoy one another, we are more likely to believe life is worth living.

Give positive attention and encouragement when you see children making an effort and problem solving – Focus on the process, not the outcome. For example:

"You worked so hard to finish that puzzle (Effort)."

"I noticed how you moved the pieces around till they all fit together. You stuck at it, right to the end" (Problem Solving)



Notice areas of strength and create opportunities for small steps toward success to build self-efficacy

Self-efficacy is a person's belief in their abilities. Notice a child's natural skills, talents and interests; look for opportunities for them to shine; and work within their zone of proximal development (ZPD).

ZPD is the learning 'sweet spot' where expectations are not too high or too low. The expectation or goal may be a stretch, but possible. Remember that a person's ZPD can change and fluctuate depending on several internal and external circumstances (positive and negative).

Our responsibility is to be aware and assess one's ability and willingness to persist in the moment. When we are attuned to these variables, we can better manage and adjust expectations to help the child feel supported, encouraged, and ultimately successful, leading to increased self-efficacy.

Build on areas of strength to develop new skills (competencies)

Competencies are the abilities, commitments, knowledge, and skills that enable a person (or an organisation) to act effectively in a job or situation. It is much more efficient and effective to build from areas of strength rather than focus our attention on areas of weakness. Our job is to create and promote activities and experiences that make areas of competence. Recognise the natural opportunities in a person's surrounding environment and plan specific activities to build skills. Skills can range from learning to cook, build structures, fix appliances, play different sports, wait, take turns, dance, problem solving, etc. Encourage people to try tasks just above their comfort zone or ability level (being mindful not to go too far above it) and support and encourage them.

What can you do?

As a caregiver:

- Notice and highlight what you and others in the family are doing well.
- Success is often relative. When something is hard, notice small steps in the right direction. For example, if a child typically responds to anger with aggression, notice when she gets mad and doesn't hit. If a teenager has difficulty asking for help, notice when he does come to you for support.
- Fill your daily routines with opportunities to have positive experiences and fun. Positive experiences can be small, informal, and unexpected. They also can be significant, pre-planned and highly intentional.
- Create and promote activities and experiences that encourage competency (build skills) and confidence (feelings of success). Recognise the natural opportunities in the child's environment.

LIFE WITHOUT BARRIERS



- Consider positive experiences that also are opportunities to build skills. Some ideas include swimming, attending a community event, having a paint night, teaching kids to ride bikes, inviting a friend over to play, hosting a build-your-own pizza dinner, etc.
- Make sure that each child/young person in your care has an opportunity to identify and build on their interest or area of competency. Areas of competency can be anything interesting or engaging for the person. Some ideas include cooking, sports, gardening, art, writing, reading, riding horses, playing an instrument, fixing/making things, being a leader, volunteering, teaching, etc.
- Consider situations and think ahead about what will help others be successful. Create an environment that will lead to success. This often requires careful planning.
- When you notice a child's skill, look for opportunities for that child to teach others. This will help them build confidence and internalise their skills.

CARE PRINCIPLES

relationship based | developmentally focused | trauma informed | family involved | competence centred | ecologically oriented