

You are the Experts of your Family!

Strengths-based resources build resilience and strengthen the capacities of children and families to address their own concerns. This is done through the development of personal strengths, support systems, critical thinking skills, healthy relationships, and an understanding of diversity within groups. This approach to learning recognizes that children and families have existing skills, abilities, and talents and are capable of meeting their own needs.

Strengths are often revealed in challenge and struggles. These become skills for success that guide behaviours, choices, and new opportunities.

Strengths-Based Approach:
Look for the unique strengths within your child. Strengths can be found in different areas of development, in accomplishments and success, and through personality and character traits. There is no failure or shortage – only opportunities for growth!

Children will experience more success with opportunities to practice their strengths when their talents are recognized and supported. Knowing their personal strengths can help children resist social pressures and make healthy choices for themselves.

Strengths can be used to support positive behaviours and avoid unhealthy ones. Recognizing strengths builds pride and passion.

Interpreting Strengths:
Consider the strengths that are revealed through challenges. A child's distractibility could mean a deep thinker, or an argument could show desire to communicate. Identify and name children's strengths to support self-awareness and growth. This will help children make healthy choices for the future.

A strengths-based approach is most effective when it is part of a positive relationship. Being able to identify and utilize our personal strengths gives us the confidence to overcome challenges.

“One who gains strength by overcoming obstacles possesses the only strength which can overcome adversity.”

Albert Schweitzer, Philosopher

Every challenge can be turned into an opportunity for growth and development:

- ✦ Talking and getting distracted may show a very inquisitive mind and the need for an outlet, like Google, to research and explore interests.
- ✦ Arguing is communicating. Use this strength to find better ways to communicate – like a talking stick or a family note jar.
- ✦ Defensiveness is emotional awareness, which can be supported with communication and healthy emotional expression.
- ✦ Grumbling about responsibility shows awareness of the cost of responsibility. Gentle reminders and flexibility will support this growth.
- ✦ Emotions should not guide all choices. Choices can be thoughtfully made through:
 - 1) Recognizing the emotion,
 - 2) Sympathizing with the emotion,
 - 3) Discussing possible reactions and behaviours.

Using strengths to support development and growth opportunities allows children and families to be members of a safe and caring community.

Healthy development takes a lifetime.

Identify children's strengths to builds self-esteem.

Children develop talents and strengths through practice.

Help guide choices by respecting children's feelings.

Turning Challenges into Strengths

A child is arguing about finishing homework before bedtime tonight. Time is limited and there is a spelling test tomorrow to study for.

This child is aware of responsibilities and flexing independence. Being responsible will take time. Make a plan and encourage your child, set boundaries and consequences. Offer choice: "you can get your spelling finished or you can go to bed and have no TV tomorrow."

Siblings are arguing with each other, teasing and tattling. Only one parent is available to diffuse the argument, and make dinner.

Siblings have particularly close relationships with each other and are learning how to resolve conflict and problem solve issues. Ask the children to participate in making dinner where they can practice cooperation while being helpful and supervised.

A child is expressing feelings of failure, saying the work "is too hard for me, I can't do it" - which makes it harder to complete homework.

This child is expressing emotions of failure or fear of failure. It is a strength to recognize and express feelings. Respect feelings, talk out the barriers, brainstorm solutions, and compliment strengths like asking for help and considering different ideas.