



What does it mean to Invest in Loss?

You are probably familiar with the adage “If at first you don’t succeed, try, try again,” and may even find yourself saying something along these lines to your child when he or she experiences failure. But what do we really mean when we suggest that one should try again and again? Repeatedly taking the exact same approach to a problem isn’t likely to produce dramatically different results. In order to truly excel in any discipline, one must be willing to take a good hard look at past performance and mistakes made, and develop a plan for how to approach the situation *differently* the next time. By cultivating a growth relationship with mistakes and viewing them as opportunities for improvement, rather than framing them as a negative judgement on one’s abilities, one can begin to invest in those losses with an aim to grow and improve.

How can you support your child with Investing in Loss?

What is your emotional response when your child experiences a loss or setback, and how do your emotions inform your reaction? How do you respond to personal setbacks? Is the behavior you are modeling something you want your child to emulate?

The key to helping children develop a growth-oriented relationship with their mistakes is to remove the negative stigma from the idea of loss and to teach them to examine those mistakes through a positive lens. When children experience failure:

- First, allow them to process their feelings
- Then, go back over what happened together, and take note of where mistakes were made
- Finally, make a plan together for how to approach the task from a different angle and give it another try

In addition, it is important to model a desire to seek out challenge and push yourself to move beyond your comfort zone in order to avoid stagnation. Rather than celebrate a perfect performance on the first attempt, say “This was too easy! How can we make it more challenging?” Encourage your child to enjoy stretch and to embrace the idea that the willingness to take risks and to fail is an essential ingredient to growth.

Habits to practice each day:

- At the end of the day, you and your child share - What is something you can do today that you couldn’t do yesterday?



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- Build reflection into your daily life (and with your child)
 - At the end of the day ask - What went well? Where am I stuck? What do I want to try to do differently?
- Model stretching outside your comfort zone
 - Learn something new, share what was challenging and what you're thinking about how you'll change your approach to handle that challenge
- Talk about your best mistake each day (help your child do the same)
 - This is what went wrong... This is what I learned from it...

Interested in learning more?

Here are a few articles and blog posts that further explain the value of struggle and how to help your child Invest in Loss:

[All Students Should be Struggling Learners](#) - blog post by Harvard professor, David Dockterman

[Helping Kids Take Criticism Constructively](#) - NY Times article with suggestions for how to help your child accept and process feedback

[I Made a Big Mistake, Now What?](#) - article with examples for how to model a positive/growth relationship with mistakes

The Art of Learning Project is a non-profit educational initiative centered on the learning principles outlined by Josh Waitzkin in his book [The Art of Learning](#). For more information about Josh and The Art of Learning Project, please take a look at our [website](#) and, to go more in depth, watch and listen to these [interviews](#).