



Fred Rogers Timeless Wisdom



Keep on Trying



We don't always succeed in what we try—certainly not by the world's standards—but I think you'll find it's the willingness to keep trying that matters most. - Fred Rogers

Fred went on to say, “Above all, I think that the willingness and the courage to keep on trying develops best if there is someone we love close by who can lend us some of the strength we do not yet have within ourselves. I don't mean someone who will do a task for us, but rather someone who will share our times of trying just by being around and being supportive, someone who can sustain the belief that we can succeed even when we doubt it ourselves. We all need quiet, caring cheerleaders like that—grownups as well as children.

It's hard to know why some children seem naturally inclined to keep on trying to do something until they succeed and why others seem so ready to give up. It's possible that some are born more one way than the other; but, even if that's true, I don't think it's the only answer. It seems to me that feeling frustrated and discouraged is something that none of us can avoid, and that our different ways of coping with those feelings are among the many things we learn.

If, as little children, we are faced with tasks that are far beyond our capabilities, we may come to feel that trying is useless because it never works. On the other hand, if we are encouraged to work at small tasks that we can accomplish with a little effort, we may, very early in our lives, experience the pleasure and gratification that come with achievement and success. We may then grow up knowing that the trying always comes first but that it's worthwhile because trying is a path that can take us to where we want to go.”

Carol Dweck's (2008) recent research on persistence (which just happens to be one of the important “soft” skills for success in school) would have been no surprise to Fred Rogers.

Dweck's studies address those times when we've said to a child, “You're so smart” or “You're really good at that” or “That's okay, no one's good at everything,” thinking we're helping children feel good about themselves. Her research with middle-school children shows us those messages are actually counter-productive.

Those comments lead children to believe that intelligence or ability is “fixed.” Those labels imply that either you’re smart or you’re not...either you’re good at something or not. When children with that “fixed” mind-set are faced with a challenge, they tend to avoid it or give up, thinking either “I don’t want to look bad, because then people will think I am not smart,” or “There’s no point in working at it. I must not be smart after all.”

But if children have been encouraged and recognized for their **effort**, like for how much they’ve practiced or worked at something, they are more likely to develop a “growth” mind-set. That means you could get better at something the more you work at it - so it’s worth persisting. In Dweck’s research, she found that when children with a “growth” mind-set run into a difficult problem, they are more likely to work at it and, in fact, they enjoy the challenge, even if they can’t solve it.

To reinforce this message for yourself and for the children in your care, you can listen to Fred Roger’s song, “**You’ve Got to Do It.**”

<http://pbskids.org/rogers/songLyricsYouveGotToDoIt.html>

To read the newsletter, **Practice Makes Perfect**, by Hedda Sharapan:

<http://www.fredrogers.org/professional/video/learning/practice.php>

Dweck, Carol S. (2008). **Mindset, The New Psychology of Success, *How we can Learn to Fulfill Our Potential.*** New York, NY: Ballantine Books, Random House.



🎵 **Strategy Song:** *Keep trying, you’ll get better!*

Daniel Tiger's Neighborhood closely parallels the gentle tone and emphasis on social and emotional strategies that made *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood* and Fred Rogers a TV icon. Fred’s creativity and innovation continue to thrive in 21st century TV. Teachers and parents will enjoy revisiting his messages with a new generation of characters.

www.pbskids.org/daniel

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