

The Successful Child We Want!

What is the true definition of **success**? What does the word success mean to you? According to the Oxford English Dictionary, the word **success** summarily means to attain fame, wealth and social status. The word success comes from the Latin word **succeder** which means to “come close to”. I have read several definitions of success and my definition of success is

“The ability to motivate oneself within the enabling environment to achieve personal goals”

In this article, I will be giving tips on how to support children to achieve their own success. Today, most adults look back and reflect on those gaps that created unnecessary struggles in attaining various achievements called success. There are questions in our minds like; If not for, Could have been, Why, It was because of, that prevented me from achieving my own success story. For me, our childhood experiences should pull out the positive aspects that we need, to guide our children in their journey to being successful adults. We should avoid enforcing our will on them. That child has a mind and can reason! Your child can never be that you that you either achieved or did not achieve.

When I was a child, my father wanted me to study law because he was in the legal profession. At first, I thought I liked the profession and was made to think through inferred actions by my parents, teachers and society that there were superior professions and law was one of them. I started developing my thoughts around being a lawyer not because it was my interest, but because of my environment. Ignorantly, my parents who meant well for me, never really took out time to study my abilities and interests. Perhaps, they had society pressure of status and profession. If they had observed and known me, they would have seen my interests when I lined up my dolls and pretended to be their teacher most times. Somehow, through all the pressures, I found myself studying Education as my first degree. Of course, my parents still hoped that I would someday study law. I have gaps created from my childhood that I am still working to fill. I bet most of us have.

The greatest gift you can give to your child or any child is to encourage them in their interests and abilities with good guidance. For a child to attain that success he or she wants, parents, carers and society have a role to play.

You do not have to be an expert or a professional to understand that a child needs you to support their abilities and interests. We need to stop and think! Some known successful and happy adults today, desired to be what they are and were encouraged by their families and society, through the creation of the enabling environment. They may not be doctors, lawyers, engineers and so on, they include successful artists, fashion designers, film directors, politicians to name but a few. Do not misunderstand me; medicine, law and engineering are equally good professions. Society needs to play down the idealistic world of professionalism. Every profession or vocation is important. Let us take off the pressure from the children because they do not need it. What they need is our encouragement and support to be what they truly want to be.

Here are a few tips of what we need to do to help every child achieve their own success not yours:

1. Take out time to ask you child about their interests. Know your child!
2. Observe with interest what books and magazines they like to read.
3. How does your child like to dress?
4. Observe with interest what games and places of interests they like.
5. Give your child the honest impression that you are interested in what they read, watch and like. Show lots of encouragement and enthusiasm by engaging them in discussions. Listen to their opinion and ask them why they have chosen that opinion.
6. Praise your child in little journeys of success.
7. Encourage your child to share their daily experience with you.
8. Make an effort to ensure that the home environment is happy and relaxed.
9. Never compare two children. Every child is an individual and has a destined goal. This is what makes our world dynamic and interesting. Diversity is what we need. For those you call slow learners, they have hidden skills and talents you have refused to see.
10. Use a lot of positive language and positive reinforcement.
11. Concentrate on the child's areas of strength and praise every little effort in areas where you perceive weakness. For example, if you perceive that a child is lacking behind in numeracy, ask that child what the issues are? Change the method of approaching the almighty numeracy! You could decide to use any other activity to introduce a topic in numeracy and make it fun for the child. If the child then solves one problem out of five, give

him/her a pat on the back and say to that child “I know you tried and you can do it”.

12. Never say words like; it is so easy why can't you do it? Sam knows his times table why don't you? You are lazy? Avoid using negative language. Use positive questions like; what is the matter? Tell me what you do not understand?
13. Do not begin to compare your abilities as a child to your child's own abilities. You are two worlds apart! Live in your child's world not the other way round.
14. Be patient with your child. Give your child time to process information and thoughts. Show affection, positive concern and scaffold the child's learning if possible.
15. Provide the conducive environment in terms of materials and attitude that will help the child to enjoy learning and achieving.
16. Make learning fun and enjoyable for your child.
17. Ask your child questions like, how they could have done something better, what they think about a topic, what they like best about an outing and why, what they do not like about a subject and why. These are just a few examples.
18. Be objective in your words and actions about every profession.
19. Model to your child respect for every profession.

I believe if we as parents, carers and educationist make a commitment to put into practice most of the above suggestions, we will be setting the enabling environment that will support any child to be self-motivated in achieving personal goals. Once personal goals are achieved by a child, it is possible to launch into success and become a success story.

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