



Nurturing Cleverer Kids

1. Ability is not fixed; it is fluid because the brain is plastic (changeable). Once children begin to grasp this idea, we can start to uncouple their self-esteem from their academic results. This is very important in order for them to be willing to take risks, try new things and accept that failure is a normal part of the learning process.
2. Carol Dweck, founder of the Growth Mindset philosophy found that a person's beliefs about their intelligence makes more impact on their academic outcomes, than any measure of intelligence. So use positive language and specific examples of your child's existing successes to nurture intellectual confidence.
3. Get into the habit of using the word "yet" about solving hard problems... "I can't do this yet" (but I will get there if I keep working on it).
4. Although some children may appear to find some subjects naturally easier than others, we can help them understand that they can overcome difficult challenges by adapting their approach. Adaptation is important. After all, Einstein once defined insanity as "doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results."
5. **Practice builds** (neural) **pathways** through a process called neuroplasticity. Encourage children to practise the things they find most difficult regularly – perhaps daily – in order to build stronger neural pathways and increase their abilities in those areas.
6. Lack of practice results in synaptic pruning – the gradual degeneration of existing neural pathways. In simple terms, the hard stuff gets even harder when we avoid it. Therefore, encourage children to start with the hard stuff rather than leaving it till later (or not at all!)
7. Model the behaviours you want to see in your child: Ensure your own self-talk is encouraging ("I can't do this **yet...**") even if you find something intellectually challenging. Keep practising difficult things until you master them.



A digital X-ray of the human brain