How to Help Kids Learn From Mistakes

When family members talk openly about times when they made a mistake and lessons they learned, it helps kids understand that mistakes are a stepping stone for success rather than a source of shame.

1. TALK ABOUT MISTAKES
Tell your child (or family) that you want to make a habit of talking about mistakes and lessons learned from them. Share that everyone makes mistakes and encounters challenges, and that these mistakes provide opportunities to learn and improve.

2. SHARE A MISTAKE
Share about a time when you made a mistake: what happened, how you handled it (even if it wasn’t so well, at first), and what you learned. It can be tempting to blame others for our mistakes, but stay positive and focus on what you did or could have done to improve the situation.

3. ENCOURAGE SHARING
Encourage your child (or family) to share about a mistake they made (what they did leading up to the mistake, what happened, something they could have tried to change the outcome). Family members can also provide (doable) suggestions on what can be learned from the mistake. Remind everyone to stay positive and kind! Talking about mistakes can be hard. If your child has trouble thinking of an example, gently remind them of a time they made a mistake by saying something like, “It’s good to share when we mess up — that’s how we can learn from our mistakes. What about that time when _______?”

4. TALK REGULARLY
Talk about mistakes and lessons learned during daily or weekly activities like mealtimes. When someone in the family makes a mistake, you can also practice saying, “What can we learn from this?”