

Optimistic Thinking: Encouragement Folder

I am growing an attitude of confidence, hopefulness, and positive thinking about myself and my life in the past, present, and future.

Instructions

Decorate the outside of this folder with your name and some phrases that describe you as a thinker and a worker.

Here are some ideas:

- I'm super persistent! I never give up!
- I listen thoughtfully.
- I work so carefully!
- I am fun to work with! J

Then ask people whose opinion you value to add their own encouraging phrases and drawings to the inside of your folder.

Here are some ideas:

- I admire how hard you work!
- I like how you really stick to it even when things are hard!
- I enjoy hearing your interesting ideas!
- I appreciate how you try hard and do your best.
- What a generous person you are! Love that—love you!

Consider taking your folder to school with you. When you open your folder, you'll have something that reminds you of what a strong thinker and hard worker you are—and of how much people care about you!



Optimistic Thinking Home Connection: Encouragement Folders

Thoughts for adults supporting this project...

Our grandparents may have given us pep talks on the power of positive thinking. Leaders and elders we admired might have reminded us to “have a good attitude.” And now, brain researchers are helping explain why those words of wisdom were right on. It turns out that people can actually grow happier.

Although you cannot be with them all during their school day, contributing to your child’s Encouragement Folder gives them a chance to hold onto your caring support while they do their best to learn. Your supportive thoughts will help them think and act in strong, positive ways.

Your child is learning to stop, take a breath, and then make a decision about how they want to think and act in stressful or challenging situations. When they repeat this same pattern of noticing, naming, and reframing, their brains actually build and strengthen new neural pathways. Helping our children recognize their feelings and control their attitudes gives them a head start toward being well-grounded and confident people.

Keep in mind

Words are powerful. Long after we’ve parted company, the words we heard and the tone in which they were said stay with us. Focusing on specific examples of your young person’s abilities and strengths helps them believe that we really see them as an individual, and that we respect and admire them for who they are.

Reflection questions

- Whose words of encouragement do I remember? Why were they important enough to me that I still recall them now?
- When I picture my child's face, what are things I can say that will light it up? How can my words encourage specific ways of thinking and acting?

Extension ideas

- Write “Our Family” in the middle of a piece of construction paper and add a comment or two about your family’s strengths. Invite other family members to add their comments. Hang this in a high-traffic area of your home so it can be added to and enjoyed.
- Make Encouragement Posters for each person in your household. Each week, put a different person’s (or pet’s) name in the center. Have colored pencils or markers handy and invite family and visitors to add encouraging and supportive words and phrases about them.

