

Don't tell me I'm  
**CLEVER!**



Growth Mindset thinking should help children become **brave learners**, willing to **take risks** and **make mistakes** as researchers have known for some time that the brain is like a muscle; that the more you use it, the more it grows.

They've found that neural connections form and deepen most when we make mistakes doing difficult tasks rather than repeatedly having success with easy ones.

In order to develop growth mindset in our children, we need to be especially careful about the language we use around them.



# What's wrong with saying a child is **clever**?



All children crave approval and praise from those they love and admire. If they hear that they are clever, they will want to continue to prove to you that this is so – they will shy away from making mistakes or partaking in activities which they find hard: they won't want to disappoint you or discover that they are not clever.

The same is true of any type of 'talent' or 'trait' praise.

# What should we praise?

You had another go!

You didn't stop when it got hard!

You learned from your mistake

You listened really well!

You tried so hard!

If we praise children's effort in their task (known as 'process' praise), children will be more willing to have a go at difficult things and make mistakes, as in doing so they do not risk losing your approval, but in gaining it for their effort, their resilience and their courage.

# Carol Dweck and Praise

Dr. Carol Dweck of Stanford University has been studying people's mindsets towards learning for decades. She has studied the effect of 'trait' and 'process' praise on the way children learn and cope with difficulties. Her studies have explored the learning personalities of many thousands of pupils and her findings support the idea that, from a desire to support and empower our children, we could inadvertently be holding them back!



In a growth mindset, challenges are exciting rather than threatening. So rather than thinking, oh, I'm going to reveal my weaknesses, you say, wow, here's a chance to grow.

— Carol S. Dweck —

AZ QUOTES

# Praise and Growth Mindset

Trait praise (do less of this)	Process praise (encourages growth mindset)
Great job – you must be really clever!	Well done – you kept working at that!
See, you did well – you must be good at this.	You did really well because you listened / practised and it worked!
I told you that would be easy because you're good at that	You got that quicker this time because you have practised and improved.
It doesn't matter if you didn't get it, you're clever at other things.	What matters is you kept trying and learning from your mistakes.
You are brilliant at football.	You listened to your coach and made the changes and look at the difference it made!
You are a natural at this!	You are getting better because you really try in your practices.

