Mistakes Are Part of Learning

When something doesn't work the first time, I can follow these steps to keep going.

1

I Try



I give it a try.
I do my best.

2

It Doesn't Work (Yet)



It's okay if it doesn't work.
Many things take more than one try.

3

I Notice How I Feel



I notice my feelings and what my body is telling me.

4

I Choose What to Do



I can use a strategy or ask for help.

5

I Try Again



I try again.
My brain gets stronger every time I try!

When I Feel Stuck, I Can Try One of These



Take deep breaths



Take a break



Use a calming strategy (music, fidget, quiet space)



Try a different way



Ask for help



Break it into smaller steps

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How to Use: Mistakes Are Part of Learning

Purpose

This visual helps individuals understand that making mistakes is a natural part of learning. It teaches how to recognize frustration, pause, choose a strategy, and decide what to do next.

The goal is not perfection. The goal is learning how to respond when something doesn't go as expected.

Step 1: Introduce the Visual

Review the visual during a calm moment, not when the individual is already frustrated.

Explain that learning something new often takes practice, and even when we try our best, things may not work the first time.

Use familiar examples such as video games, schoolwork, sports, or learning a new skill.

Step 2: Walk Through the Five Steps

- I Try: I give something a try, even when I am unsure.
- It Doesn't Work (Yet): Something may not go as expected. That is part of learning.
- I Notice How I Feel: I recognize frustration, disappointment, worry, or other feelings and notice what my body is telling me.
- I Choose What to Do: I can pause, use a calming strategy, ask for help, or try something differently.
- I Try Again: When I am calm and ready, I can practice again using what I learned.

Remind the individual that trying again does not have to happen immediately. Sometimes taking a break and returning later is the best next step.

Step 3: Practice Choosing a Strategy

Review the When I Feel Stuck section together.

Ask the individual to identify two or three strategies they would feel comfortable using when frustrated.

Practice those strategies during calm moments so they become familiar before they are needed.

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Step 4: Connect It to Everyday Situations

When a small mistake happens, gently connect the experience to the visual.

Try asking:

- "What part didn't work the way you expected?"
- "How are you feeling right now?"
- "What is your body telling you?"
- "Would taking a break or asking for help be useful?"
- "What might you try differently next time?"

Avoid requiring the individual to answer questions or problem-solve while overwhelmed. Focus on regulation first.

Step 5: Notice and Reinforce Progress

Look for opportunities to recognize the process rather than only the outcome.

Instead of focusing on whether something was completed correctly, notice when the individual:

- Recognizes frustration before it becomes overwhelming.
- Takes a break or asks for help.
- Tries a different approach.
- Accepts that a skill may take practice.
- Returns to an activity when ready.

We get more of what we notice. Recognizing these small moments helps build awareness, confidence, and independence.

Key Reminder for Families
Learning to manage mistakes is a skill that develops through repeated practice. Start with small, manageable situations and gradually apply the strategies to more challenging experiences.

When frustration becomes intense or safety is a concern, prioritize calming and safety rather than completing the task.

One Small Nugget: Success isn't always trying again right away. Sometimes success is recognizing, "I'm frustrated, and I need a break before I can learn."

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