

LESSON 1.1

Reframing Reading Struggles into Opportunities

Your response to reading struggles shapes your child's relationship with reading more than any technique or curriculum.

✗ BEFORE THE SHIFT

"WALKED. You've seen this word a hundred times!"

Lucas's eyes well up. "I hate reading." Sofia feels like a failure.



✓ AFTER THE SHIFT

"Hmm, that word's being tricky. What do you notice about it?"

Lucas relaxes. For the first time in weeks, he doesn't ask if they're done yet.

The Transformation

Sofia learned that her response to struggle matters more than whether Lucas gets every word right. From critic to curious guide. From shame to safety. From battles to bridges.

Four Key Strategies

Transform reading time by changing how you respond

1

Normalize the Struggle

All readers struggle—even adults. When you treat bumps as natural, children feel safe to take risks.

"Even grown-ups get stuck on words sometimes. It's totally normal."

2

Use Growth-Mindset Language

Your words teach your child whether mistakes are shameful or whether they're information.

"You're still figuring it out—that's how learning works."

3

Get Curious, Not Critical

Curiosity models problem-solving and shows that mistakes are information, not failures.

"Hmm, I notice you keep saying 'house' for 'horse.' I wonder why?"

4

Spotlight Micro-Wins

Celebrate effort, noticing, and strategies—not just correct answers.

"You caught your own mistake—that's what great readers do!"

The Language Shift

Replace fixed mindset phrases with growth mindset alternatives

✗ Avoid (Fixed Mindset)

"You should know this by now."

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"We've done this a hundred times."

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"Stop guessing!"

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"You're not paying attention."

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"Why can't you remember this?"

✓ Use (Growth Mindset)

"You're still figuring it out—that's how learning works."

"This is a tricky one! Let's try it a new way together."

"Let's slow down and look for clues in the word."

"It looks like your brain needs a quick break—let's wiggle."

"Let's find a way to help this word stick."

Practice This Week

Three activities to transform your reading time



The 5-Second Pause

When your child gets stuck, silently count to five before you speak. Gives them time to self-correct and reduces your anxiety.



Process-Only Praise

For one session, no "Good job!" Only specific praise about effort and strategy: "I loved how you sounded that out!"



Curious Questions

When stuck, ask ONE curious question: "What do you notice?" or "What could we try?" Wait for their response.

Why This Works: The Science

Your calm, curious response keeps your child's brain in learning mode

When Children Feel Criticized

- Amygdala activates (fear response)
- Prefrontal cortex goes offline
- Working memory decreases

- Child literally can't learn effectively

When Children Feel Safe

- Prefrontal cortex stays active
- Working memory is accessible
- Risk-taking increases
- Persistence improves

Your Calm Is Their Compass

Every stumble is an opportunity to plant a seed of resilience. You're not teaching your child to never struggle—you're teaching them how to struggle well.