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## Parents' Top Tips for Helping a Discouraged Child

Can anything cause more instant heartbreak for a parent than the sight of a dispirited child? And children with learning and attention difficulties experience more than their fair share of discouragement as they struggle to learn.

Research tells us that when a child is overcome by a strong emotion like discouragement, you must first deal with the emotion before trying to tackle the problems that caused the emotion.

That's also what parents who are members of our MVP (Most Valuable Parent) Research Club seem to do intuitively. The MVP club is composed of parents who have signed up to participate in projects aimed at helping us better understand their needs and to refine our offerings. We asked them, "What is your top tip for helping when your child is discouraged?" Here are their tips, sorted into ten categories, starting with ways to empathize with your child's discouragement.

1. Show empathy.
2. Hit the "Reset" button.
3. Focus on the positive.
4. Break it down.
5. Help them be superheroes.
6. Foster motivation.
7. Look at the big picture.
8. Take the long-term view.
9. Coax a smile.
10. Your child is not alone.

### 1. Show empathy.

Each child learns differently — and expresses his emotions differently, too. As Dr. Robert Brooks reminds us, children may mask discouragement with such behavior as avoiding, quitting, clowning, denying, acting angry, or being impulsive.

So the first step is to recognize how he acts when he's discouraged, then to empathize with him. How? One child may be comforted by talking directly about his feelings. Another may need a round-about approach.

Fiona from Queensland, Australia, fosters a deeper sense of empathy with her child by taking an indirect route. "I talk about my own childhood, relating a similar situation. My daughter asks questions about how I solved the problem or what I was feeling discouraged about. Sometimes my stories are slightly embellished, but this opens up the lines of communication."

