

5 Tips on How to Approach a Bad Grade

The dream for most parents is for their kids to bring home a report card filled with good grades and positive remarks about their child's behavior. But sometimes, this just isn't the reality. Perhaps your child receives one subpar grade, or maybe they bring home a whole slew of them. This can be frustrating and disappointing, and your first reaction may be wanting to yell and start handing out punishments. But before taking steps such as grounding or taking away their phone, consider our suggestions on how to approach the subject with your child and how to potentially inspire positive change.

Take some time

Many times, our first reaction can be strong and even a bit harsh. When gazing over your child's report card for the first time and scanning the bad grade(s), you may be overcome with some powerful negative feelings. But like with other situations in which you are overwhelmed with strong emotions, it can be helpful to take a step back and give yourself time to process the situation and think through how you want to proceed. So before doing anything, including discussing the report card with your child - take some time, be it hours or even a day or two.



Let your child know that you need X amount of time to think, after which you will have a conversation with them. In the meantime, continue to treat your child the same as any day; acting upset or angry could make your child feel nervous and apprehensive, feelings that will not mix well with any open conversation you hope to have down the line.

Acknowledge the positives

You may be fixating on the one bad grade or even a few bad grades. But remind yourself to look for the positives as well. Was there one subject in which they particularly excelled? Did their teacher

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commend them for their class participation or their kindness towards others? Or perhaps, in the class in which they received a bad mark, did they turn in all their assignments, complete and on time?

As you take time to process the situation, and your feelings, seeking these “good things” will help give you perspective. Your child is more than just a bad mark, and in your conversation, it would be meaningful to acknowledge the things they are doing well so that they are reminded that you care about their successes, however little they may seem, not just their missteps.

Ask what happened

You’ve taken time to think, and now it’s time to have a conversation with your child. It can be helpful to think of it as merely that, a conversation between a concerned party and someone who may have a struggle or be in need of some extra help. It will be important to watch your tone; try to avoid sounding accusatory.

Additionally, be mindful of the way you phrase things; attacking your kid’s character, like saying they are “bad” at a certain subject, could create negative associations in your child’s view of themselves. Instead, perhaps approach the conversation like this: “I looked at your report card yesterday and I noticed you struggled a bit in history. Have you been having trouble with the material in that class? Or maybe something else? Let’s talk so we can figure out what we can do to get you back on track.” This tone is concerned, yet encouraging your child to be open and honest. Excuses won’t help anyone.

Help set goals

After identifying some struggling points for your child, discuss how they can improve their grade by targeting these struggles. Ask them what they think would help, and add in some of your own advice and insight as well. Together, set out some attainable goals to strive towards and stick to.

If they are consistently making lots of mistakes on their homework, can they spend an extra 20 minutes going through the work more slowly and thoroughly? If tests are a weak spot, can they start studying for tests two days earlier? If they are struggling with the general subject material, can they actively stay on top of their learning by asking their teacher more questions? Or maybe if their

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organization skills are a hindrance, can they stick to writing down assignments and organizing their notes daily? As the parent, you can help your child stick to their goals and help monitor their progress

Talk with the teacher

A resource that can also be beneficial for helping get your kid back on track is their teacher. They are the one in the classroom every day with your child; they may notice things your child may not be aware of or be able to articulate. Getting in touch and having a conversation with the teacher can help you give perspective on how to best support your child.



Ultimately, whether or not you decide to enforce a punishment is up to you. Just remember, the most important thing is that your child knows that no matter what grades they receive, you will always love them!



Originally posted on the Now What? Blog on 3.25.21 The Now What? Blog served for nearly 7 years to

- 1. Normalize parents seeking support and help as a manner of child abuse prevention*
- 2. Engage community in how they can work to prevent child abuse*
- 3. Work to build resiliency in families through promotion of the 5 protective factors*

Maybe you coach a baseball team or you help care for the neighbor kids from time to time. You are investing in the safety and security of the children in our community. Because it truly does take a village to raise our children, we want to offer the tools needed to bring awareness and education to preventing child abuse.