

Growing Brain Power: A Grown-Up's Turn

From the practice of Elliott McCray, Ed.S., The McCray Learning Lab

What this builds (transformative SEL): Agency (“I can do it”).

This practice is grounded lightly in **Carol Dweck's mindset research**: children praised for their **effort and strategies** pick harder challenges and bounce back from getting stuck, while children praised for being **smart** tend to do the opposite: avoiding hard things, hiding mistakes, and quitting to protect the label. And one small word (“**yet**”) measurably keeps a child in the trying. What you praise, and the little words you add, are what grow.

The moves, ready to grab

- Instead of “You’re so smart” → “**You worked so hard on that.**” Praise the trying, not the talent.
- Instead of “Here, let me do it” → “**Let's just do this one small part.**” Shrink the step, don't steal the climb.
- Instead of “You can't, just stop” → “**You can't do it... yet. Let's rest and come back.**” Protect the rest, keep the door open.
- When it clicks → “**Your brain grew a little stronger just now.**” Say the how out loud.

This is a **practice tool for rehearsing skills, not therapy, counseling, or a clinical service**. And it never shames the grown-up: every “you’re so smart” and every “here, let me” comes straight from love; this is just practice for the words and the moves.

Want the kid version? [Open “Growing Your Brain Power Every Day!”](#) and read it with your child: same three words, told from Sprout's side.

Your privacy: if you use the optional “say it” recorder, your voice stays on this device: it is never saved, never uploaded, and it is gone when the page closes.

From The McCray Learning Lab: Elliott McCray, Ed.S.

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