



**Self-Efficacy:** a belief in one's own competence, or the belief that one is capable of performing in a certain manner to attain a certain set of goals.

There are four building blocks that contribute to the development of self-efficacy:

### **1. Mastery experiences**

When someone attributes their success to internal, stable and global factors, that person will experience a sense of mastery which will reinforce self-efficacy. (*"I earned an A on my test because I am intelligent and I know how to study."*)

We can create mastery experiences for others by giving them opportunities to make decisions, use and practice their skills, and try different paths to achieve their goals. This requires genuinely knowing their strengths and being able to link those to their goals.

### **2. Observing others or "modeling"**

Seeing someone who is similar to oneself work hard to achieve a goal or overcome an obstacle contributes to our belief that we, too, can successfully negotiate our environment.

### **3. Direct persuasion by others**

A person's beliefs about their ability to master a situation are influenced by what they hear from teachers, parents, coaches, and friends. Students who receive strong messages that they have the skills and capabilities to handle a situation are more likely to put in greater effort and to persist in the face of setback. Such feedback should not consist of empty pep talks ("you can do it") but should rather reflect the student's real strengths, and be specific. ("You are good at solving problems. You can think of a creative solution.")



Use "process praise" to praise students for their efforts and the strategies they used to bring about a success. ("You did well because you kept at it and tried different ways to solve the problem.") Emphasizing effort and strategy helps students focus their attention on variables they can control.

### **4. Mood**

Positive emotions and mood build perceptions of efficacy. People who experience positive emotions can also experience "upward spirals" such that their positive emotions enable them to see more solutions to problems they face, which strengthens their positivity, which further enhances their ability to cope with challenges, etc.

Challenge negative thinking by helping students identify negative thoughts and then use evidence to prove why the negative thought is inaccurate. Replace the negative thought with a positive, truthful idea. Also promote positive emotions by celebrating successes, and teaching students to accurately assess their contributions.

*If you treat an individual as he is, he will remain how he is. But if you treat him as if he were what he ought to be and could be, he will become what he ought to be and could be.*

—Johann Wolfgang von Goethe