

How do you respond if your child says, "I can't!"

It's certainly a tough one for us as parents. And many of us have already tried saying, "You can't YET!" and for some children, it just doesn't work...

All we want is for them NOT to get overly upset or frustrated so they can persevere and keep going...right?

But let's think about it...

Is perseverance really about NOT getting frustrated when something doesn't work?

Perseverance is actually about not giving up DESPITE the frustration.

So when our child says, "I can't!", we don't need to prevent the frustration from happening or pull them out of it.

What we want for our child is to keep going DESPITE the frustration.

We want them to learn how to tolerate that uncomfortable feeling of not getting something right away.

So first and foremost, instead of pulling them out of the frustration, get into it with them by showing your empathy, *"It's really tough when something doesn't work! I totally get it!"*

Once your child hears that they're being understood, you can try these strategies as your next step:

1. Offer to take a break. When you see your child's big emotions begin to overwhelm them, you can say:

"Sometimes when I feel frustrated, it helps me to take a break and do something else. Would you like to take a break?"

If you pre-ordered [Big Life Journal — Daily Edition](#), you can use the pages "When I Feel Upset, Worried, or Disappointed" to brainstorm ideas together.



2. Offer to help them started. If you're going to help your child, it's better to do just enough to get them started. You can say:
"Would you like me to help you get started with this maths problem? We can find what you already know together."

3. Be present. Sometimes we just need to be near our child but not necessarily DO anything. Your child might be able to keep going on their own. You can say:
"I see you're working really hard and I know you can do hard things. I'm here if you need me."

I hope this was helpful. Try these strategies and let me know how it goes!

Warmly,
 Alexandra

[Big Life Journal](#), creator

