**Start with Your Child’s Strengths**

Recently, I posted my top 10 tips for home-schooling success, whether it’s just helping with homework or being full-time home school teacher to your kids. Now I am elaborating on each item on the list. Parenting tip #8 is this:

Start with your child’s strengths and help him

use what works to impact and improve

his weaknesses.

When I was playing baseball, like all players, I occasionally fell into a batting slump. When taking time off, getting extra batting practice, visualizing the opposing pitcher as my mortal enemy and daring him to get the ball by me, and other tried and true remedies for batting slumps failed, I went back to basics. See the ball. Hit the ball. Guess what? It worked. I was thinking waaay too much and not focusing on what I was good at and what came naturally.

Similarly, when helping your child with homework or home schooling, start by helping him focus on what he’s good at. Often, homework and school assignments come at varying levels of complexity and time allotment. Kids can feel overloaded and defeated in the task very quickly. Help them start the process with some quick successes before tackling the longer, harder assignments.

“Devon, quit stalling, dude,” Joel admonished his son, as he worked with him on school assignments.

“Dad, this is hard,” he sighed. “I don’t know what I’m doing.”

“Well, chemistry is tough,” Joel agreed. “Tell you what. Let’s put chemistry aside for now and crank out some of these other subjects.”

Joel closed Devon’s chemistry book and set it aside. “How about history? Just take a moment to answers these questions at the end of the chapter. We can check in on chemistry later.”

Keeping your child’s feet to the fire with homework can just backfire, leaving him resentful and only doing it to get you off his back. Recognizing the subjects he likes and doesn’t like leads him to see that you get him. You understand. If you have to spend more time on a particular subject to get through it, leave that subject for the end of the study time. That way, he will have felt success and accomplishment on the other subjects, building up a positive head of steam for the harder one.

Also, as subjects seem to be harder, help him enjoy the little successes with high fives and quick breaks. When a ten-part task is broken down to complete, it doesn’t seem as long in the completion. Alternating a hard task with an easier one, eventually gets both tasks accomplished.

Finally, where there are specific, ongoing issues, such as reading problems, coordinate with school resources and use these tools to address your child’s concerns. As much as possible, tack these activities onto regular homework and home schooling tasks. If possible, find a way to make this extra effort be fun and game-like. Creating flash cards and working on memory tasks and phonics principles will improve your child’s output across all subject matters. Even such seeming drudgery can be transformed into meaningful teachable moments.