

CONFIDENCE TO TRY

What is this developmental skill?

Confidence to try is the willingness to attempt new tasks despite uncertainty or the possibility of making mistakes. It reflects a belief that effort is worthwhile and challenges can be overcome.

How does this normally develop?

Children develop confidence when caregivers encourage exploration, celebrate effort, and provide support during setbacks. Successes build competence, while supportive responses to mistakes teach children that failure is part of learning.

How can neglect interfere?

Neglected children may have experienced repeated failure without encouragement or support. They may expect disappointment, criticism, or abandonment when they struggle. As a result, avoiding challenges can feel safer than risking failure.

What might this look like?

A child may:

- Refuse to try unfamiliar activities.
- Say, "I can't," before beginning.
- Become upset by small mistakes.
- Depend on adults for reassurance.
- Quit quickly when tasks become difficult.

Parenting Implications

Praise persistence rather than perfection. Break difficult tasks into manageable steps and celebrate progress. Let your child know that mistakes are expected and provide opportunities to try again without shame.

From Understanding to Attunement

When your child hesitates to try, they may not lack ability—they may lack confidence that they can succeed. Your encouragement helps build the courage to keep trying.