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Fear of failure

Points to note

- Many students with autism are very particular about certain aspects of their work. They may insist on getting things right; they will start an activity, make a mistake, then start over again. In this case, they may never see a task through to completion.
- Some students become frustrated by their mistakes; crossing them out, or over-enthusiastically rubbing their mistakes out until they make a hole in their paper. This causes even greater distress!
- Some students are acutely aware of their inadequacies. For example, they may have very poor handwriting and are so embarrassed they will refuse to hand in work.
- He may be very reluctant to do any unfamiliar activity. This may be because he is unable to imagine *how* to do something unfamiliar and he cannot envisage the *sense of achievement* that comes with accomplishing something new.

What you can do

- Don't comment on failure, just show the student the correct way.
- Avoid negative comments, like saying 'no' or 'that's not right'.
- Show the student that you make mistakes too, and show him how you deal with them, ie. if you make a spelling mistake, you simply put a line through the word.
- The child needs to learn that it is OK to make mistakes. If he makes a mistake, direct the consequences away from him by telling him that it is a really hard task but you are pleased that he is making an attempt at it. Turn it into a learning experience - "Now that you've made that mistake I know that I need to teach you..."
- Build success into activities by ensuring tasks are not too difficult.
- Computer use alleviates a lot of stress and has the advantage of being self-correcting with features like a spell-checker. Encourage computer use as much as possible.
- Students with autism might receive a lot of negative comments about their behaviour, so counter this with praise at every opportunity. Children with autism need a lot of encouragement. See also [Self esteem and depression](#).