



WE SAY “YOUR BEST IS GOOD ENOUGH”, BUT DO WE REALLY MEAN IT?

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We often tell our kids,
“Your best is good enough.”

It sounds supportive. Encouraging. Safe.

But if we’re honest with ourselves, there’s a quieter question underneath that sentence:
Do we really mean it?

Do we mean it when their *best* still comes with mistakes?
When it doesn’t meet the expectations we had in our heads?
When it looks nothing like their sibling’s, their friend’s, or the version of success we imagined for them?

Because for many teens, that phrase doesn’t land as unconditional reassurance.
It lands with fine print.

Your best... as long as it’s still an A.
Your best... as long as you’re coping and not falling apart.
Your best... as long as you don’t disappoint.

And teens feel that - deeply.

As an educational psychologist, I sit with teens every day who are exhausted from trying to decode what “good enough” actually means. They are constantly scanning the adults around them for cues: *Am I safe here? Am I failing? Is love steady, or does it depend on how I perform today?*

When “your best” is only celebrated when the outcome looks good, teens quickly learn that effort alone is not enough. They learn that rest feels risky. That struggling should be hidden. That asking for help might be seen as weakness.

That’s not what we intend - but it’s often what they experience.

When we truly mean it

Real “**your best is good enough**” sounds and feels very different.

It means:

- Effort is valued more than outcome
- Struggle is allowed, not punished
- Rest is not labelled as laziness
- Asking for help is seen as strength, not failure

It means we stay emotionally steady even when their best fluctuates - because it *will*.

Teen brains are still developing. Emotional regulation is under construction. Pressure is constant: academic expectations, social dynamics, identity formation, the quiet fear of not being enough.

Some days, their best looks like studying hard and doing well.

Other days, their best looks like simply showing up.

And sometimes, their best looks like surviving the day without falling apart.

When we only affirm them on their “strong” days, we unintentionally teach them that their weaker days are unacceptable.

The message that really matters

When we truly mean *your best is good enough*, we send a powerful message:

You are enough - even when you're tired.

You are worthy - even when you fall short.

You don't have to earn love by performing.

This kind of safety doesn't lower standards.

It creates the conditions where growth can actually happen.

Teens who feel emotionally safe are more willing to try, to take risks, to recover from mistakes.

Teens who feel constantly evaluated often shut down, burn out, or quietly give up - even if they still look “fine” on the outside.

A gentle challenge for us as adults

Our teens don't need more pressure.

They are already carrying plenty.

What they need is safety.

Belief.

And adults whose words and reactions match.

So maybe the real question isn't whether *their* best is good enough.

Maybe the question is whether we are brave enough to stand by those words - even when it's uncomfortable, even when it challenges our expectations, even when their best doesn't look the way we hoped it would.

Because when we mean what we say, our teens feel it.

And that feeling - of being enough - is often what helps them become more than they ever thought they could be.

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