

The Power of Encouragement

“That’s What I’m Talking About!”

The power of targeting praise

Select a specific behavior that you would like to see in your home. Discuss it with the child involved. For example, if you would like to teach your child to use a regular voice when they want something rather than a whining voice, explain what each voice sounds like.

Tell your child that a whining voice is rude and irritating to listen to. Let them hear you use a whining voice. Then, when they ask for anything without whining comment, “That’s what I’m talking about! You could have whined, but you stopped yourself and used a regular voice. You are really getting the hang of this.”

“I love to hear your regular voice. You sound so much more grown up.” “Oops, I almost thought you were going to whine, but then you caught yourself. That’s what I call determination.”



For a child scared of using the new potty chair try, “That’s it! You walked right over there and sat down even though you were a little scared. I knew you could do it.”

For a child who cries easily, “Man, your brother was messing with you and you didn’t even let THAT make you cry!”

Targeted praise is only concentrated during the time the child is learning to make the behavior a habit. Focus the praise on only one or two areas at a time.

A Mirror For Your Child

“You are a mirror your child looks into every day, and you reflect back to her what she will come to believe about herself. These reflections are like snapshots of herself that she pastes into an imaginary photo album, laying the foundation of her identity.”

-Katherine C. Kersey

The Art of Sensitive Parenting

A person’s self-image is based not on who she is but on who she *thinks* she is. And a child thinks she is who her parents believe her to be.



STOMP OUT NEGATIVE COMMENTS AND LABELS

Though children do need to become aware of their shortcomings and areas of weakness, they do not need to be haunted by negative labels and off-handed comments. Most times these labels only serve to solidify the very behavior the parent is hoping to eliminate.



Comments may include but are certainly not limited to: she’s spoiled rotten, he’s a real pistol, she never listens, he’s always been a handful, he’s a bully, she’s such a cry-baby, stop acting like a little princess, you’re a brat, you’re lazy, you’re a fool, you’ll never learn, why can’t you be like your sister?

HAPPINESS IS AN INSIDE JOB

Consistently, 90%-95% of parents polled list “being happy” as one of the ultimate goals for their children. Telling our kids they are great, awesome, the best, wonderful, and gifted does not make them happier as adults. It is also not *things* that make us happy. Instead, it is solid relationships with God and people as well as a deep understanding of our inner selves that keeps us smiling.

And keeping children happy in the short term almost certainly insures that they will fail to develop the skills necessary to be happy in the long term.

We want to avoid training our children to believe that it is external rewards that are responsible for personal happiness.

It is very common for toy shop owners to see young children picking out a new toy after a doctor’s appointment or a tough day at school—the beginnings of therapy shopping.

Affluent kids can come to see the outside world and the “stuff” that can be bought there, as a dependable (if temporary) source of relief and satisfaction. They fail to look within themselves for the courage and will to struggle through difficulties.

Work experiences necessary

Children need work experiences to develop a sense that success is a function of their own efforts. Celebrating a job well done is **not** a bribe or a reward. Help a child discover the way they

feel when they work hard and achieve something—anything. A clean garage after intense effort can be celebrated, “You guys have to come out here and look at the garage! You won’t even believe what it looks like now. Your brother even vacuumed up all the dead flies that were stuck to the window. Let’s all take a break with some cold lemonade.”

Internal motivation is key

It is internal motivation that is the generator that propels children to figure out their particular interests, abilities, and passions. Internal motivation is what drives kids to engage in activities that are satisfying for their own sake. It is the basis of all true learning.

Studies show that children who are internally motivated not only learn more and perform better, but they enjoy their work more, making it more likely that they will be willing and eager to try their hand at increasingly difficult challenges.

A study was performed in which students were given increasingly difficult tasks to complete. Some students were praised at the beginning levels for how *smart* they were. The other group was praised for their effort. By the final task, almost all the students who were praised for being smart had quit because it was “too hard.” The other group of students all persisted and most accomplished the final task.

Summarized from The Price of Privilege by Madeline Levine

Reminder



1. Praise their character
2. Praise their effort
3. Praise their accomplishments

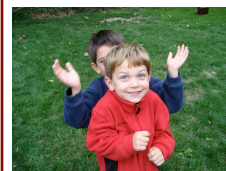
Basic Assumption of Goodness

If we hold a basic assumption of our child’s good intentions, the child will more easily see himself as good.

For a child who is holding tightly onto another child’s toy, “Give him a second. He’s giving it to you. He knows that it is yours and you are leaving now.” The child will think to himself, “I am? OK.” If not, grab it out and hand over the toy while still offering up good intentions.

When the child’s

intentions
are bad, try:
“Wow that’s
not like you.
You are
usually a boy
that cares



about other people. I wouldn’t expect to see that again.”

RAISING RESPECTFUL AND RESPONSIBLE CHILDREN

WHY THREATS, REWARDS, AND BRIBES DON'T **REALLY** WORK

"He always listens when I threaten to spank him."

"If you're good, I'll get you a cookie." "Here is \$10 for each 'A' on your report card." These comments are so mainstream that we almost might forget the damage they cause.

Though the above actions might get the appropriate response from the child, they tear down the innate bond between parent and child. The parent's position is weakened to become a dispenser of rewards and punishments, and the child maintains the ultimate decision-making power of whether he still wants to misbehave despite the consequences. Hmmm, do I even want the cookie or is it more fun to pull things off the shelves and run around the aisles?

By their very nature, children want to please their parents. Remember the study of preschoolers who loved playing with magic markers? When incentives and rewards were added to some of the kids, they stopped freely playing with the markers until they were sure of the reward.

Adding incentives and threats weakens our words and our resolve to be the parent. Using threats adds a

layer of communication so that children become trained to wait for the threat before obeying. They weigh the consequences and rewards before deciding how to behave. They see us as needing to manipulate the situation rather than to rely on our leadership.

Relying on these tactics does not **teach** our children how and why to behave. It merely attempts to get the requested behavior at all costs, so the child **looks** like he knows how to behave appropriately.

The next time you are in situation where you may be tempted to make a threat or offer a bribe, instead focus on your long-term goals. Take the child's hand and pull them out of the pool or carry the tantrum-throwing child to the car and finish shopping another day. Your child will quickly learn that you mean what you say and you don't need any tricks to prove it.



PRACTICE LOOKING FOR THE GOLD



"People are developed the same way gold is mined. Several tons of dirt must be moved to get an ounce of gold. But you don't go into the mine looking for dirt. You go in looking for the gold."

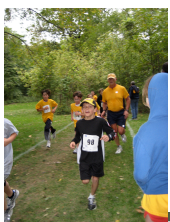
-Dale Carnegie.

With that insight in mind, when you consider each of your children, do you see a lump of dirt or a gold nugget?

Now occasionally your gold nugget may get so covered with dirt that you can't see the glow of the treasure underneath. But your job is to brush off the dirt and bring forth the beautiful, unique gold nugget that lies beneath. To do that, you have to look for the gold.

Give your child a vision for who he is and what he can become, "When I look at you, I see a boy who really knows what he wants and is determined to go after it. That trait will be a tremendous asset as you grow up. One thing you want to be careful about is not to forget to consider how other people might be feeling."

Polish the gold, but brush away the dirt!



ENCOURAGEMENT IS BETTER THAN PRAISE

Consider using praise sparingly (unless targeted) and use encouragement abundantly. Encouragement inspires us to continue onward despite difficulties. It gives us hope that we can accomplish a task. It tells kids we believe in who they are. Praise simply congratulates a job already well done. Too much praise can create praise-dependent kids.

Can You Praise Too Much?

The more you praise your child, the more self esteem your child will have. Right?

Not at all. Kids have a way of knowing if they have truly earned your acclaim or if you are manipulating them. Moreover, children can even be confused by excessive praise.

Example 1. : You call your son a "genius." He thinks:

- "Does anyone else feel that way about me?"
- "It's too much work to be a genius."
- "She knows I'm not a genius."

Your unrealistic praise is way out of line. Your child knows he is not that good. He wonders what you want or discounts much of your praise as being ridiculous.

Example 2. : To cheer your daughter on, you don't mention the difficulties (or much of the truth) about her performance in soccer. She does not make the team and is crushed primarily because you told her how easy it was to make the team.

Steps to effective praise:

- Explain that your child *has done well* and can do even better next time. Use specific praise rather than generic praise.

• Don't answer a statement of dissatisfaction with praise. Instead, acknowledge the feelings shown and help your child plan for a better performance next time. Remember that the best praise for your children is praising their own judgement.

Excerpt from Cyberparent.com

The Bottom Line on Praise and Encouragement

Please don't let these ideas be another piece of information that causes worry or fear in your parenting. Don't let any of the above be the cause of, "I hope we're not using too much praise." or "Was that praise or encouragement you just told him? Remember, more encouragement than praise or we'll mess him up!" :-)

The bottom line is that acceptance, understanding, and warmth in your relationship with your child is still the foundation. Your child should understand that you will always address poor behavior, attitudes, or habits because you love him too much to let those things go unaddressed.

