POSITIVE DISCIPLINE

The classic guide to helping children develop self-discipline, responsibility, cooperation, and problem-solving skills

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Mrs. Petersen felt discouraged, thinking the exchange had not been very helpful. However, the next day she noticed Debbie no longer had a chip on her shoulder and did not display any hostility. After school Debbie showed Mrs. Petersen a picture she had drawn of herself and a friend riding bikes. She explained this was the most fun thing she had done the night before. Mrs. Petersen then shared another fun thing she had done.

If you analyze it, you will understand why such a brief exchange can have such dramatic results. First, the child feels singled out for special attention. The child may reject this special attention at first because of his or her suspicion that it will probably be another session for blaming and lecturing. Second, the child experiences the unexpected when the teacher ignores behavior problems. Third, adults often show interest in having children share, but they don't demonstrate mutual respect by sharing themselves. A child may feel extra belonging and significance when you share something about yourself.

It is suggested that teachers spend a few minutes of special time with each student in their class during the year. Start with the children who seem the most discouraged, but keep track to make sure you don't miss anyone.

Many teachers complain that they don't have time for special time. It is true that teacher's are feeling a lot of pressure to help students pass academic tests. However, teachers who understand that encouragement is just as important (if not more) as academics find a few minutes while children are doing seat work or walking in line.

Parents can apply the concept of special time as part of the bedtime routine (although the bedtime routine should not replace daytime special time). When Mrs. Bruner tucks her children into bed at night, she asks them first to share the saddest thing that happened to them during the day and then the happiest thing. She then shares her saddest and happiest events.

At first her children went overboard on this opportunity to complain about sad things and would sometimes end up crying. She would patiently wait for them to calm down and then say, "I'm glad you can share your feelings with me. Tomorrow, when you don't feel so upset, we'll talk about it some more to see if we can figure out some solutions. Now tell me your happiest thing." If the child couldn't think of a happy thing, Mrs. Bruner would share her happy event. After the children got used to this routine, the sad events were reported in a matter of fact way, followed by ideas for solving or avoiding a similar problem in the future. The children soon enjoyed sharing their happy events more than their sad events.

ENCOURAGEMENT VERSUS PRAISE

For many years there has been a great campaign for the virtues of praise in helping children gain a positive self-concept and improve their behavior. Again, we must "beware of what works." Praise may inspire some children to improve their behavior. The problem is that they may become pleasers and approval junkies. These children (and later these adults) may develop self-concepts that are totally dependent on the opinions of others.

Other children resent and rebel against praise, either because they don't want to live up to the expectations of others or because they fear they can't compete with those who seem to get praise so easily.

Even though praise may seem to work, we must consider the long-term effects. The long-term effect of encouragement is that it invites self-confidence. The long-term effect of praise may invite dependence on others.

As discussed earlier, another mistake adults have made regarding praise is the notion that they can *give* a child self-esteem. Self-esteem and can't be given or received, it is developed through a sense of capability and the self-confidence gained from dealing with disappointments, solving problems, and having lots of opportunities to learn from mistakes.

The successful use of encouragement requires adult attitudes of respect, interest in the child's point of view, and a desire to provide opportunities for children to develop life skills that will lead to self-confident independence from the negative opinions of others. Some characteristics of both praise and encouragement are outlined below in order to offer guidelines for evaluating the examples in the chart below.

   Research by Carol Dweck, Ph.D. a professor at Columbia University, has now proven what Adler taught years ago. Praise is not good for children. Praise can create "approval junkies" instead of children with enhanced self-esteem. Dweck has also found that praise can hamper risk taking. Children who were praised for being smart when they accomplished a task chose easier tasks in the future. They didn't want to risk making mistakes. On the other hand, children who were "encouraged" for their efforts were willing to choose more challenging tasks when given a choice.
http://nymag.com/news/features/27840/ to read the complete article

   All of the Positive Discipline books teach the value of encouragement instead of praise. Following is an excerpt from Positive Discipline on the difference between praise and encouragement.

<div align="center">DIFFERENCES BETWEEN PRAISE AND ENCOURAGEMENT[1]</div>

	Praise	Encouragement
Dictionary Definition	1. To express favorable judgment of 2. To glorify, especially by attribution of perfection 3. An expression of approval	1. To inspire with courage 2. To spur on: stimulate
Addresses	The doer; "Good Girl."	The deed; "Good job."
Recognizes	Only complete, perfect product; "You did it right."	Effort and improvement: "You gave it your best." Or, "How do you feel about what you accomplished?"
Attitude	Patronizing, manipulative:	Respectful, appreciative: "Who can show me

	"I like the way Suzie is sitting."	how we should be sitting now?"
"I" message	Judgmental: "I like the way you did that."	Self-directing: "I appreciate your cooperation."
Used most often with	Children: "You're such a good girl."	Adults: "Thanks for helping."
Examples	"I'm proud of you for getting an A" (Robs person of ownership of own achievement.)	"That A reflects your hard work." (Recognizes ownership and responsibility for effort.)
Invites	Children to change for others. "Approval junkies"	Children to change for themselves. "Inner direction."
Locus of control	External: "What do others think?"	Internal: "What do I think?"
Teaches	What to think. Dependence on the evaluation of others.	How to think. Self –evaluation.
Goal	Conformity. "You did it right."	Understanding. "What do you think/learn/feel?"
Effect on sense of worth	Feel worthwhile when others approve	Feel worthwhile without the approval of others
Long-term effect	Dependence of others	Self-confidence, self-reliance.

The differences between encouragement and praise can be difficult to grasp for those who believe in praise and have seen immediate results. They have seen children respond to praise with beaming faces. However, they don't think about the long-term effects of dependence on the opinions of others. Even those who want to change from praise to encouragement find it awkward to stop and think before making statements that have become habitual.

It may help to keep the following questions in mind when wondering whether the statements you make to children are praise or encouragement:

- Am I inspiring self-evaluation or dependence on the evaluation of others?
- Am I being respectful or patronizing?
- Am I seeing the child's point of view or only my own?
- Would I make this comment to a friend?

I have found the last question especially helpful. The comments we make to friends usually fit the criteria for encouragement.

ENCOURAGEMENT VERSUS CRITICISM