

# PRAISE WITH IMPACT

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Praising and encouraging kids can be difficult for many people. It just doesn't come naturally. They are hard-wired for criticism rather than praise.

Some children, particularly boys, feel awkward receiving praise unless it is done carefully. It can be misconstrued as being manipulative and not genuine, particularly when it is simply a throw-away line. Praise can become meaningless for some kids unless it is done with a little thought and care.

## USE THREE TYPES OF PRAISE

**THERE ARE THREE TYPES OF PRAISE THAT HAVE POSITIVE IMPACT ON CHILDREN'S (AS WELL AS ADULTS') BEHAVIOUR AND SELF-ESTEEM.**

**1. Descriptive praise:** Throw a spotlight on the behaviours that kids do well. Rather than a trite 'well done' draw a word picture of what they did well and let them know its impact. Tell them what you see and how you feel. "Wow. You have tidied the room really well and put everything back where it should be. It's a pleasure to come into the living room." Such comments genuinely made become stored in their bank of skills and builds up their confidence.

Private praise is more effective than public praise for boys as they can

become embarrassed being praised in front of their friends or relatives.

*Use for:* keeping house rules, changing poor behaviour (when combined with ignoring some of their poor behaviour)

**2. Summary praise:** Give your child a positive label to live up to by summing up their positive behaviours with one word. "You really worked hard to finish your project. That's what I call persistence." "You cleaned up the kitchen without being told. You are a self-starter." Persistence and self-starter become part of your children's ICRS (Internal Character Reference System).

*Use for:* kids who lack confidence, kids of all ages but particularly those under 10 as they really use parents as reference points

**3. Self-praise:** Praise is always a bit more powerful when it comes from yourself so allow children to brag a little. "I did that well." "I am really pleased with the way I did that." "I did the best I could." "I love the art I did at school today." Teaching kids to self-praise can be a little tricky but you can start by asking them how they feel about their efforts. When you use descriptive feedback you actually show kids how to self-praise.

Some kids need to be cued regarding self-praise. "Are you pleased with yourself because you tried your best in the game?" Encourage them to say they are pleased with themselves rather than just agree with you. This gets them into the habit of self-praise.

*Use for:* kids who always want your reassurance, use for children's efforts rather than behaviour

There are plenty of people in your child's life who are critical of them – including their peers and maybe siblings. It is a parent's job to tell kids what is right about them, so spend a little time telling kids what you see and feel when they do something well. Make up positive labels that they can add to their Internal Character Reference Systems and encourage them to brag a little when they have done something well.