



Hold the Praise — Try Encouragement



Your Reactions to Praise and Rewards

Effects on adults

1. What was your reaction to the praise and rewards you received (or didn't receive) during the coloring contest? Check off the words and phrases that describe your feelings.

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> angry | <input type="checkbox"/> dislike of the winners |
| <input type="checkbox"/> cheated | <input type="checkbox"/> mad |
| <input type="checkbox"/> incompetent | <input type="checkbox"/> hurt |
| <input type="checkbox"/> competitive | <input type="checkbox"/> isolated, alone |
| <input type="checkbox"/> indifferent | <input type="checkbox"/> frustrated |
| <input type="checkbox"/> unmotivated | <input type="checkbox"/> manipulated |
| <input type="checkbox"/> smart | <input type="checkbox"/> judged |
| <input type="checkbox"/> excited | <input type="checkbox"/> other (describe) |

Effects on children

2. Have you seen examples of children acting or feeling any of these ways when they were in praise-and-reward situations?

3. How have you seen children respond to praise and rewards?

Rationale

4. Why do adults praise and reward young children?

Negative Implications of Praise

Praise

- **Makes children more dependent on adults.** Children look to others for approval of their work instead of their own judgement.
- **Takes away children's power to evaluate their own work.** By giving judgmental praise, children begin to depend on adults to evaluate what is good or bad, which prevents them from making choices and decisions about their own work.
- **Decreases children's confidence in themselves.** Praising has a negative effect on children's self-esteem.
- **Produces "praise junkies."** Children who are praised a great deal seek praise. Children begin to expect praise and rewards even when adults see no need for them. Children will act out and do other things to get the much-needed praise, including actions that may or may not be appropriate.
- **Causes anger and resentment when used to manage or manipulate.** Using manipulative praise can cause resentment, anger, and competition between children when adults say things like "I like the way Joshua is cleaning up — he's doing a good job." Or "Chyanne is sitting crisscross applesauce; she is ready for me to start large-group time." The other children around them may have hurt feelings or even resentful feelings toward those who did get praised, especially when their name is never called.
- **Discourages risk taking.** When children encounter a problem, they may not take a risk because they worry about losing the adult's approval if they don't solve the problem correctly or they make a mistake.
- **Lessens self-motivation and discourages problem solving.** When children are constantly praised for performing tasks, they are less likely to try new tasks beyond what they already know they can do.
- **Adults' manipulation of children with praise and rewards teaches children to manipulate adults.**

Encouragement Strategies

Alternatives to Praise

Instead of praising children, here are some things you can do:

- ◆ Participate in children's play. Work side-by-side with children using the same materials in a similar fashion. Become a "partner" by taking turns with them during play, matching the level of complexity of their play, and generally following their lead.
- ◆ Encourage children to describe their efforts, ideas, and products. Our goal is to have children, not adults, evaluate children's work. We want the children to develop self-esteem — to feel good about their work and ideas. One way to facilitate this is to ask children open-ended, divergent questions, such as the following:

What can you tell me about your picture?

How did you build this hospital?

I notice that you have put many buttons on top of the wood. What will you do next?

- ◆ Acknowledge children's work and ideas by making specific, descriptive comments. You can encourage children to classify and describe their work and ideas by making specific, objective comments about children's work as you talk with them. These kinds of comments also serve as nonjudgmental responses when children want adult acknowledgment. Some examples of adults comments:

I see that you have painted a picture that has lots of blue paint on the bottom, and red paint along the side.

Okay, I will wear the big blue hat with the gold band around the middle.

Distinguishing Praise From Encouragement

1. With a partner, identify which statements, A–L, are praise statements and which ones are encouragement statements. Put the letter “P” in front of the praise statements and the letter “E” in front of the encouragement statements.
2. Rewrite every praise statement to make it a statement of encouragement and support.

_____ A. “I like the way Brian is sitting with his legs crossed.”

_____ B. “What a good job of putting away the blocks, Tyrone.”

_____ C. “I notice that you have used red paint and green paint at the top of the picture.”

_____ D. “Billy, what a beautiful painting.”

_____ E. “You helped us set the table.”

_____ F. “How did you build your animal hospital, Ellie?”

_____ G. “I like the way you printed your name.”

_____ H. “Very good, Pam — you walked inside the classroom.”

_____ I. “Great job, Ofelia.”

_____ J. “Could my doll come to your restaurant? He is very hungry.”

_____ K. “You picked up a lot of blocks today.”

_____ L. “I am looking for good listeners. Madeline is a good listener. She is ready.”

