

Transcribed from the Family Album Radio Program, a co-production of University of Florida IFAS Extension, the Department of Family, Youth, and Community Sciences and of WUFT-FM. If you'd like to learn more, please visit our website at familyalbumradio.org

*Listening, learning,
and living together:
it's the science of life.*

Praise or Encouragement¹

Kate Fogarty²

Building self-esteem in children is not about telling them how wonderful they are.

Rather, it's about helping them feel good about their actions and accomplishments.

There are two kinds of feedback that adults typically give in response to children's behaviors. The first is encouragement, which fosters a child's sense of mastery and allows them to evaluate their own behavior. The second form of feedback is praise, which may have the counter effect to what adults intend. It can actually make children feel helpless and more dependent on others' feedback and approval. Praise tends to be judgmental, is based in competition, and is vague. It's often delivered publicly, and is associated with a finished product, rather than occurring during the preparation phase (Hitz & Driscoll, 1988).

Encouragement allows the child to evaluate his or her own efforts rather than compare himself to another child. It's specific, and occurs through the process of a child's step-by-step accomplishments toward a given goal (Hitz & Driscoll, 1988).

Examples of praise might be, "What a beautiful painting." Encouragement sounds more like, "I notice how you used a lot of bright colors in your painting." As a parent or teacher, you may often catch yourself saying, "Good job!" or "That's great!" to your children. This is only natural, as most of us recall hearing similar words said to us as children. Practicing

1. This document is FAR0030, one of a series of the Department of Family, Youth and Community Sciences, Florida Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida. First published December 2007. In the interest of time or clarity, the broadcast version of this script may have been modified. Please visit the EDIS Web site at <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu>.
2. Kate Fogarty, assistant professor, Department of Family, Youth and Community Sciences, Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida, Gainesville, FL 32611.

encouragement is not about eliminating praise entirely from your vocabulary, but balancing comments of praise while using as much encouragement as possible.

Listening, learning, and living together: it's the science of life. "Family Album" is a co-production of University of Florida IFAS Extension, the Department of Family, Youth and Community Sciences and of WUFT-FM. If you'd like to learn more, please visit our Web site at <http://www.familyalbumradio.org>.

To listen to the radio broadcast:

http://www.radiosource.net/radio_stories/praise.mp3

http://www.radiosource.net/radio_stories/praise.wav

References

Hitz, R., & Driscoll, A. (1988, July). Praise or encouragement? New insights into praise: Implications for early childhood teachers. *Young Children*, 6-13.

Jarzab, A. (2004). Alternatives to traditional adult approval. *The Teaching Professor*, 18, 1.

Kelly, F. D. (2002). The effects of locus of control, gender, and grade upon children's preference for praise or encouragement. *The Journal of Individual Psychology*, 58, 197-207.

Kelly, F. D., & Daniels, J. G. (1997). The effects of praise versus encouragement on children's perceptions of teachers. *The Journal of Individual Psychology*, 53, 1-11.