

Improve Your Child's Self Esteem and Motivate Students To Learn

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One of the best ways to improve a child's self-esteem is to help them develop a positive attitude about life.

- 1. Developing a positive attitude in our self.**

- 2. By learning how to praise our kids effectively in appropriate ways**

- 1. Developing a positive attitude in ourselves.**

Chovot Ha Levavot (Duties of the Heart, vol.II p.99)

“ A pious man.....passed by the carcass of a dog that gave forth an offensive odor. His disciples said to him ‘How dreadfully does this carcass smell! He said to them ‘How white are his teeth!’ The pupils then regretted the disparaging remark they had made....if it reprehensible to make a disparaging remark concerning a dead dog, how much more is it to do so concerning a living human being

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The object of this pious teacher was to instruct his pupils not to accustom their tongues to speak evil, so that self-restraint should become natural to them and they should accustom their tongues to speak good of others so that this too would become a fixed and natural habit.”

a. Day to Day Stresses

b. Spouses

“When you date someone seriously, close your heart and open your eyes and when you marry close your eyes and open your heart”

c. Ourselves

d. Children

2. By learning how to praise our kids effectively in appropriate ways:

- a. Evaluative Praise**
- b. Descriptive Praise**

Descriptive Praise: (Faber & Mazlish, 1999)

- Describe What You See
- Describe How It Made You Feel
- Sum it up With A Word

Motivating Children To Learn:



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1. Have a positive attitude about learning
2. Keep your relationship positive
3. Praise them for their effort not their grades- not for being smart

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10 DAYS TO A LESS DEFIANT CHILD

GIVE YOURSELF CREDIT AS A PARENT

Go through the list of positive behaviors below and pat yourself on the back for all the ones you can check off.

- Helped with potty training
- Cooked meals
- Picked out clothes
- Gave baths
- Taught to tie shoes
- Helped teach to read
- Helped with homework
- Took to playdates
- Read stories at night
- Attended teacher conferences
- Took bowling
- Hosted sleepovers
- Provided affection
- Attended school concerts
- Watched school sports events
- Expressed love
- Decorated house for the holidays
- Listened to briefings of the day
- Loved despite defiance directed at you

No matter how many of the above positive parenting behaviors you have done, you should feel good about them. As you will see in the next section, how you talk to yourself plays a big role in how you feel about all the great things you have done and the mistakes you have made.

Jeffrey Bernstein

DAY 5: Reinforcing the Positive Changes in Your Child

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Reward Yourself with Positive Self-Talk

Self-talk is the conversation you have with yourself in your mind. We all do it, and more often than we are aware. Your self-talk may be about what to get when you go shopping, when to get your car's oil changed, planning your next activity, or reflecting on what others are doing. When your self-talk is positive, you are likely to be calmer and more relaxed. For example, if you say to yourself, "I feel good about how I handled that conflict" or "I'm glad I did not yell," you are praising yourself and you will feel less stressed.

Negative self-talk, such as "I never should have been a parent" or "I'm hopeless," will do the opposite and reduce your confidence. Pay closer attention to your self-talk and do your best to keep it positive. Many people assume that events around them produce these feelings. A perfect example of this is when your defiant child says something like "You make me angry!" as if you have control over how he feels. The reality is that events can't make you feel anything. It's the way you *perceive* these events that causes you to feel what you feel.

You will feel much better about your parenting efforts if you stay mindful of all the positive things you have done for your child. I also encourage you to be wary of any negative self-talk messages you may give yourself, such as:

- "I'm a mean mother."
- "I never get a moment to myself."
- "Everyone takes, takes, takes, and no one gives to me."

As you may recall from Day 2, if you give your child a negative label he will live up to it. The same applies to you. Trashing yourself as a parent in the face of a setback or problem only makes matters

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Blessing of a Skinned Knee

The Blessing of Acceptance • 45

Wendy Model

teacher's lack of skill rather than on the child's limitations.

This is a shame, because real problems get glossed over or missed until fourth grade, when there's no more hiding it and the child's weaker areas show up on standardized tests.

Some parents can maintain the specialness myth with their children long past fourth grade. Is this good for the child's self-esteem? Listen to Isabel, a student I interviewed at an elite private school. Isabel will be entering the eleventh grade next year. She told me that she was having a hard time socially. The last two boys she wanted to have as boyfriends hadn't been interested in her. Her teachers seemed to favor other students. She felt confused and hurt:

I know why this is so hard for me. My mom and dad always, always made me feel like I was the best: the most beautiful, the smartest, the most charming. And mostly I've done well in everything. But, now I'm finding out that I'm not that unusual. Maybe I'm good enough, but I don't know anymore.

Like so many parents, Isabel's mother and father were afraid their daughter would think she was ordinary. Whether they were also reluctant to admit to themselves that their child was "merely" average, I don't know. But their Lake Wobegon attitude has not benefited Isabel. They've put her on a pedestal and now she's stuck up there, unable to find out what level she would reach if she had a chance to bob around with everybody else.

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How To Talk So Kids Will Listen Faber & Mazlish

Some possible ways to complete the sentence in:

Drawing 1. "Determination" or "will-power" or "self-control."

Drawing 2. "Flexible" or "resourceful" or "adaptable."

Drawing 3. "Friendship" or "loyalty" or "courage."

There's nothing sacred about any of the words listed above. And again there are no right or wrong answers. The point is to find a word that will tell a youngster something about himself that he may not have known before—to give him a new verbal snapshot of himself.

What I personally like about this way to praise, is that it's so "do-able." It's a matter of really looking, really listening, really noticing and then saying aloud what you see and what you feel.

One wonders how such a simple process can have such a profound effect. And yet, day after day from our small descriptions our children learn what their strengths are: A child finds out that he can take a confusing mess of a room and turn it into a neat orderly room; that he can make a gift that's useful and gives pleasure; that he can hold the attention of an audience; that he can write a poem that's moving; that he is capable of being punctual, of exercising will power, of showing initiative, resourcefulness. All of that goes into his emotional bank and it can't be taken away. You can take away "good boy" by calling him "bad boy" the next day. But you can't ever take away from him the time he cheered his mother with a get-well card, or the time he stuck with his work and persevered even though he was very tired.

These moments, when his best was affirmed, become life-long touchstones to which a child can return in times of doubt or discouragement. In the past he did something he was proud of. He has it within him to do it again.



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Re-Appraising Praise

In all of our books we talk about the drawbacks of the typical praise that parents and teachers use to help children feel good about themselves ("You're so good...great...terrific...wonderful...smart") and contrast these evaluations with the power of descriptive praise ("You did it"... "You figured it out"... "You stuck with that problem until you solved it").

In a recent issue of the *American Educator*, Carol S. Dweck, Professor of Psychology at Columbia University, reports the result of her research in an article titled "Caution - Praise Can Be Dangerous." Her findings support our work and add additional insights, which we felt were important to share with our readers.

In studies she conducted with 400 fifth grade students from different backgrounds in different parts of the country, all were given a puzzle task that was easy enough for them all to experience success. One part of the group was praised for being intelligent. They were told, "That's a really good score! You must be smart at this." Children in a second group were also told they had very good scores, but they were praised for their effort: "You must have worked really hard." The same students were subsequently given the option of either attempting another easy task or a harder one from which they could learn a lot. Those who had been praised for being "smart" chose the easy task. They weren't about to risk their reputations. *Those students who had been praised for their effort chose the challenging learning task.*

In the second part of the study the same students were given a set of problems that were deliberately made harder and on which they did not do as well. Result? The students who had originally been praised for being "intelligent" wanted nothing more to do with the problem and "felt dumb at having encountered a setback." *In contrast, those praised for effort enjoyed working on the more difficult problems and were eager to take them home to practice.*

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Re-appraising Praise

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The final test produced the most startling result. Once again, all the students were asked to do an easy set of problems. Those who had originally been praised for their intelligence in the first test, but who had done poorly in the second, now *did* worse than before, while *those who had been told they worked hard did even better than before.*

When the students were questioned afterwards, it seemed that the different kinds of praise had had a profound effect upon them and led them to two very different sets of beliefs about themselves. Those who were told they were smart thought of intelligence as some kind of gift, something they either had or didn't have. Any setback was unsettling. It meant they weren't as smart as they thought. Worse yet, they believed that effort was a sign of weakness. If they were really smart, they should be able to "get it" without working.

In contrast the children whose efforts were appreciated had a very different reaction. They experienced setbacks as simply an indication that more study, more effort was needed. *They saw intelligence as something over which they had control and which could be improved through hard work.*

What does all this mean to us as parents and teachers? It means that we need to think twice before telling a youngster, "You're a great athlete...a wonderful artist...a whiz at spelling." Instead let him hear, "It's not easy to connect a bat with a fast ball at just the right instant". "So you drew another picture of a farm — only this one has a barn and horses" ... "You've got your own method for teaching yourself new words." You write them, say them aloud, and write them again until they stick in your head!

We want to give our children the message that the process is as important as the product. We want them to value their ability to hang in there, to practice, to persist. We want them to view a mistake — not as proof of failure — but as an opportunity to learn something they never knew before. #