

Catching the Good and Praising Your Child

Parents should make sure that when they catch their child doing something good, they provide support to encourage those positive behaviors. The following tips can help parents understand appropriate ways to praise a child and examples of how to be more specific about praise.

After learning about appropriate praise, parents can look at the Example Praise Chart. A blank chart is provided at the end for parents to put on their fridge and keep track of the praise they offer to their child.



1. Be sincere

- As a parent, be careful not to use generic praise such as “That’s great” or “Awesome!” as a way to brush off your child. If this becomes a habit, your child may be less likely to believe you when you are giving sincere praise. It is important that you take the time to listen to your child and only praise when it’s appropriate.

2. Notice good behavior

- A child should be positively praised whenever he or she does something right. Children need to hear encouragement from you as a parent to develop a healthy level of self-confidence. It is important to point out good behaviors as they happen so that your child will continue to do these behaviors. For example, you could say, “I am so proud of you for picking up all of your toys today; you did such a great job!”

3. Comment on good qualities

- When praising your child, it is important that you focus on the positive and consistently comment on your child’s good qualities such as being humble, positive,

or kind. Pointing out qualities that are unique and positive to your child will make him/her feel valued and recognized. For example, you could try saying “I really appreciate how organized you are with your schoolwork. I am proud of what a great student you are!”

4. Be specific

- Only using phrases like “great job” are not specific enough for children to understand. Try to specify what you appreciated about your child’s actions as much as possible. For example, “You did a great job helping out Mom do the dishes! We love how helpful you are.”

5. Praise the effort, not the outcome

- Your child should be praised for the effort put into an activity, regardless of the outcome. If your child puts effort into doing a good job, praise his or her hard work to encourage future efforts.

6. Be realistic

- Giving realistic praise helps your child learn how to judge him or herself fairly. Realistic praise can help your child understand that improvement is possible, motivating him or her to try again. For example, you could say to your child, “You’re getting better at baseball every single day! I remember there was once a time when you could barely throw the ball and now look at you! You made it to first base today!”



7. Praise any positive, new behavior

- Any new behavior requires focused praise to encourage repetition. For example, if your child usually has to be told to take his or her plate to the sink but does so on his or her own without being asked, you could say, “Wow, what a big boy/girl! I am so proud you did that on your own.”

8. Praise should encourage self-motivation, not a cash reward

- Positive reinforcement through praise or acknowledgement helps encourage behaviors more than cash or gifts. Your child will be self-motivated to continue behaviors due to the good feeling experienced when successful, rather than from the material things he or she can acquire.

9. Praise should not suggest expectations

- Praising your child about being a “natural” at school or in a sport may cause your child to feel pressure to always succeed in that subject. Instead, focus on the effort your child puts into an activity to praise things in his or her control.

10. Pay attention to how your child is feeling

- If your child is frustrated with something, don’t just jump to praise. Discuss your child’s feelings first, and then help him or her see the positive side of what he or she

tried to accomplish. Praise the effort that was put into the activity and offer to help your child improve. For example, if your child tried to draw you a picture but is frustrated and unhappy with it, you could say, "Drawing can be really tough; a lot of artists have to practice for years before they can get a drawing just right! Would you want to try art classes to practice your skills?"



References

<http://www.webmd.com/parenting/guide/the-right-way-to-praise-your-kids>

<http://afineparent.com/mindset/praising-children.html>

<http://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/singletons/201307/praising-kids-how-proper-praise-helps-children-part-2>

Example of "Our Good Week" Chart to tape to your fridge

| DAY | PRAISE |
|---------|--|
| 4/5/15 | To Sarah: It was very sweet of you to share your toys with Jimmy today, Daddy really appreciates it. |
| 4/6/15 | To Jimmy: Congratulations on receiving a gold star in class for being the most patient in the lunch line. |
| 4/7/15 | To Jimmy: You teacher says you worked hard on your flower pot drawing in art class today. I'm proud that you gave it your best. |
| 4/8/15 | To Sarah: You got a B! You've improved so much since your last science test! You just proved to yourself that you should never give up. |
| 4/9/15 | To Jimmy: I really like that song you sang. Would you mind teaching me how to ding it? |
| 4/10/15 | To Sarah: I know you're really nervous about the soccer game, but you've practiced really hard this week. No matter how it turns out, you've done your best! |

Our Good Week!

| DAY | List one or two things your child did well today |
|------------------|---|
| Sunday | |
| Monday | |
| Tuesday | |
| Wednesday | |
| Thursday | |
| Friday | |
| Saturday | |