

Praise and Encouragement

Praise and encouragement are actually two different things. Praise uses words like ‘good’ or ‘smart’ to ‘reward’ a child’s actions or behaviours. Encouragement, on the other hand, is more descriptive. It draws your child’s attention to their own actions. It helps them know why their actions are helpful and appreciated. The chart below highlights the key differences.

Praise may lose its meaning for children when it’s used too much. Encouragement helps develop children’s self-confidence and self-esteem in the long term. Encouragement can help children feel respected and appreciated and help them feel good about themselves by focusing on their effort, improvement and achievement. When you use encouragement more often than praise, you’re helping your child learn to think about their actions, their efforts and accomplishments. It will also help them get along with others.

<p style="text-align: center;">Praise</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Praise</u> focuses on the <u>Person</u> or the <u>Product</u></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Encouragement</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Encouragement</u> focuses on the <u>Effort</u></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Uses words that judge children’s character or looks (e.g., good, excellent, beautiful, smart) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Uses words that describe children’s actions and effort
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Is general (e.g., “Good job.”) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Is specific (e.g., “Thank you for picking up your toys and putting them back in the bin. That was a big help.”)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Focuses on children’s character (e.g., “You’re such a good kid.”) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Focuses on children’s efforts and achievements (e.g., “I really appreciate your help with setting the table.”)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Focuses on doing it right and the end product (e.g., “That’s a good drawing. I’m so proud of you.”) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Focuses on the effort, improvement and the process (e.g., “You kept trying even though you were frustrated with that drawing and you did it!”)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Children’s motivation to change depends on meeting the approval of others (e.g., “What do others think of me?”) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Children’s motivation to change becomes their inner voice (e.g., “What do I think?”)

Adapted from Nelsen, J., Erwin, C., & Duffy, R. (2007). *Positive Discipline: The First Three Years*. Three Rivers Press. Dinkmeyer et al (2017). *Parenting Young Children: Systematic Training for Effective Parenting (STEP) of Children Under Six*. Circle Pines, Minnesota: American Guidance Service, Inc. Faber, A. & Mazlish, E. (2012). *How to Talk So Kids Will Listen & Listen So Kids Will Talk*. New York: The Hearst Corporation.