

Building Self-Esteem

Choose your words carefully when using praise to motivate

Have you ever complimented your child, only to have her contradict you? Your intention was to help your child feel good--but somehow the opposite happened! To prevent this:

- * Remember how it feels to be evaluated. It isn't easy to hear over-the-top compliments: "You're the bravest person ever!" Sometimes it reminds people of what they're not. "Gee, I wasn't very brave at bedtime yesterday."

- * Describe rather than judge. Say what your child did instead of what she is. "You gave one of your favorite candies to Janet. She smiled a lot about having something so yummy."

- * Let your child react. She may think, "I gave away one of my favorite things, and it made someone happy. I did something nice." It's more valuable for her to think good things about herself than to rely on others' views.

- * Be patient. Using "descriptive" praise may feel awkward at first. But it helps your child truly feel good about herself.

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