

# PROCESS PRAISE

REPLACING 'ENTITLEMENT' IN PRAISE AND CREATING SELF-RESPECT

No matter where you are, if little ones are around, it won't take long before you'll hear, "You're so smart," "You're so pretty," or "You're the best on the team."

It's normal to think your child or grandchild is brilliant, better looking and more capable than any other child; however that attitude taken to the extreme can aid in creating a society of children who feel entitled.

Would you be surprised to learn that the majority of freshman college students score high on narcissism? What did we expect? These children have been raised with being praised for their every action and that praise has instilled an attitude of entitlement. Children actually believe they deserve a high paying job, a beautiful home and exotic trips. When you talk to them in-depth and ask them how they plan to acquire these privileges, they have no plan other than knowing their parents had it, so they will, too.

Praise doesn't build confidence; in fact, too much praise makes a child less motivated to take risks and try new things. If you continually tell a child how well they spell, they expect and are motivated to get more praise for spelling. Forget the other subjects, or sports, because they get praised for spelling well. This narrows the child's world and they don't branch out or build confidence by trying new things and failing at some.

A much wiser approach is something we call "process praise," which means you begin to notice and comment on the strategy the child used to figure something out. You focus less on natural talents and more on effort. You teach them that the brain, just like their other muscles, can grow, which helps the child understand that the more effort they make, the more success they will likely see. This helps children understand that challenges are good, and the brain can learn new ways of doing things.

Here are three suggestions for starting a plan of process praise:

Don't praise as much as you may have in the past and, when you do, begin with praising effort

or attempts at trying new things. Telling a child you like the way they tried something new is going to be more helpful to them than praising something they are already good at.

Praise their strategy, or thinking. "Wow, you really had to use out-of-the-box thinking to come up with that plan."

Never lie to them or tell them they are good at something they are not. Children know the truth...if you say it's a good job and it isn't, they will stop trusting you or believing you.

Children get discouraged and when parents give blanket praise such as, "You're so smart" or "You're such a good pitcher," children begin to think, "This is what I am," or "This is what I do." A child can be smart, musical, compassionate and so much more. When parents teach children to accept challenges, try new things and risk not being the best, they challenge them to grow and exercise their brain. Everyone has natural talents and weaknesses. The key is to help a child feel confident enough in their strengths to risk appearing weak in areas that need more strengthening. Let's bring back good old-fashioned effort and teach our children the value of working toward their dreams. ✦



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