

## Help your child develop an inner locus of control

### *Encouragement vs Praise*

*What's the difference? And why does it matter in my parenting?*

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I like to help parents be very clear about their vision and purpose when considering how they interact with their children. We want kids to develop an intrinsic sense of worth and value rather than be dependent on extrinsic sources to boost their self esteem. More simply said, we want children to feel good about themselves from their own conclusions rather than be addicted to having their parents and teachers tell them how good they are. So, I recommend parents remove the words “good” and “bad” from their vocabulary to begin. I teach parents how to encourage and reflect rather than review and rate.

Praise focuses on the product while encouragement focuses on the effort. Consider this scenario: Your child brings you a drawing she's been working on at the dining room table and she says with a big smile on her face, “Mommy, look!” If you say, “Sweetie, that is beautiful! Good job!” you have just reviewed and rated your daughter's product. If alternatively you say, “You spent a lot of time working on this. Look at all the colors you chose to use. I can tell by the smile on your face that you are very proud,” then you are reflecting the emotion (pride and pleasure with her own effort) she is presenting, reflecting back your observation of the effort she put forth and encouraging her to continue to work hard and to feel proud of herself.

Try telling your child, “Thank you for helping with the dishes. That was very helpful,” instead of, “Good job.” Next time your son takes out the garbage without having to be asked you might say, “You noticed the garbage can was getting full and you chose to bag it up and

take it out without anyone asking you to. You're realizing this is your house too and pitching in shows that you care about keeping things nice around here."

An occasional pat on the back and "good job" is not at all ill-advised. In fact, every once in a while some praise in healthy doses can be a nice peppering of positive reinforcement. Day in and day out, however, parents are going to see a more lasting positive result, higher levels of self esteem, more motivation and initiative in your kids if you provide reflective encouragement rather than ratings and reviews.