

Differences between Praise and Encouragement

(Revised from a chart by Sacramento parent educators Bonnie G. Smith and Judy Dixon)

Research by Carol Dweck, Ph.D. a professor at Columbia University, has now proven what Adler taught years ago. Praise is not good for children. Praise can create "approval junkies" instead of children with enhanced self-esteem. Dweck has also found that praise can hamper risk-taking. Children who were praised for being smart when they accomplished a task chose easier tasks in the future. They didn't want to risk making mistakes. On the other hand, children who were "encouraged" for their efforts were willing to choose more challenging tasks when given a choice. All of the Positive Discipline books teach the value of encouragement instead of praise. Following is an excerpt from Positive Discipline on the difference between praise and encouragement.

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN PRAISE AND ENCOURAGEMENT

	Praise	Encouragement
Dictionary Definition	1. To express favorable judgment of 2. To glorify, especially by attribution of perfection 3. An expression of approval	1. To inspire with courage 2. To spur on; stimulate
Addresses	The doer; "Good Girl."	The deed; "Good job."
Recognizes	Only complete, perfect product; "You did it right."	Effort and improvement: "You gave it your best." Or, "How do you feel about what you accomplished?"
Attitude	Patronizing, manipulative: "I like the way Suzie is sitting."	Respectful, appreciative: "Who can show me how we should be sitting now?"
"I" message	Judgmental: "I like the way you did that."	Self-directing: "I appreciate your cooperation."
Used most often with	Children: "You're such a good girl."	Adults: "Thanks for helping."
Examples	"I'm proud of you for getting an A" (Robs person of ownership of own achievement.)	"That A reflects your hard work." (Recognizes ownership and responsibility for effort.)
Invites	Children to change for others. "Approval junkies"	Children to change for themselves. "Inner direction."
Locus of control	External: "What do others think?"	Internal: "What do I think?"
Teaches	What to think. Dependence on the evaluation of others.	How to think. Self-evaluation.
Goal	Conformity. "You did it right."	Understanding. "What do you think/learn/feel?"
Effect on sense of worth	Feel worthwhile when others approve	Feel worthwhile without the approval of others
¹ Long-term effect	Dependence of others	Self-confidence, self-reliance.