

CLDDV 121: Guidance of Young Children Laffranchini, Instructor

ENCOURAGEMENT versus PRAISE

Praise:

- Another form of behavior modification (Kohn, 1993)
- Hope to make child feel good (Kohn, *Punished by Rewards*)
- Type of reward
- Compelling evidence that praise not only is counterproductive in increasing desired behaviors, but actually has a negative influence on self-esteem (Grusec, 1991)
- Praise says “I approve of you *because*...”
- Makes child feel insecure and fearful of rejection
- External judgment about another person (Katz and McClellan, 1991)
- Sets adult up as authority who knows what is best
- Implies adult is able to evaluate others’ performance better than they are
- Can make children dependent on others to tell them whether or not they are doing well
- Keeps children from judging themselves and developing autonomy
- Condescending because it implies a power imbalance
- Rarely does a lower-status person praise a higher-status person (would you praise your boss?)
- Roadblock to communication
- “I’m proud of you” is a judgment of the other person (versus “Congratulations” or “I’m impressed”, which is more respectful)
- Manipulative
- Can put children in competition with one another
- Empty generalities

Encouragement:

- Helps child identify their own feelings of pride or success
- Not adult’s opinion
- Shift from external judgment toward internal satisfaction
- Focus children’s attention on their own judgment of their behavior helps child feel good about what they have done without damaging their autonomy
- Helpful to communication, form of reflective listening
- Positive “I messages”
- “Thank you” tells your feelings and means “I appreciate what you have done”
- Giving information without evaluating (“You put all the blocks back in the right place”)
- Specific versus general
- Private statement to the child versus public statement to the class about one child’s performance
- Child does things for intrinsic reasons rather than to please adult

- May seem subtle, but critical!

“Children need encouragement like a plant needs water.” Rudolf Dreikurs (Adlerian psychologist and author of *Children: The Challenge*)