



# Encouraging Children with Authentic Praise

The fact is that children like praise. Praise is a like candy. A little can be very satisfying. Too much can cause problems. Awareness is the key. Notice if children are becoming addicted to praise—need it all the time. Rudolf Dreikurs taught, “A child needs encouragement like a plant needs water.” In other words, encouragement is essential. Children may not die without encouragement, but they certainly wither. Since encouragement is so essential, it would be good to know what encouragement means and how to do it. Let’s start with the difference between praise and encouragement.

Those who want to change from praise to encouragement may find it awkward to stop and think before making statements that have become habitual. It will help to keep the following questions in mind when wondering whether the statements you make to children are praise or encouragement:

- **Am I inspiring self-evaluation or dependence on the evaluation of others?**
- **Am I being respectful or patronizing?**
- **Am I seeing the child’s point of view or only my own?**
- **Would I make this comment to a friend?**

Encouragement is helping children develop courage—courage to grow and develop into the people they want to be, to feel capable, to be resilient, to enjoy life, to be happy, contributing members of society, and, as Dreikurs said, “To have the courage to be imperfect;” to feel free to make mistakes and to learn from them. Consider trying:

1. **Conversations where children learn to give and receive compliments and learn to brainstorm for solutions to problems.**
2. **Curiosity questions to invite children how to think instead of what to think—and to give them a sense of choice to use their personal power for social responsibility.**
3. **Letting go so children have opportunities to learn and grow—mistakes and all.**
4. **Show faith in children so they can develop faith in themselves.**
5. **Spending special time to make sure the message of love gets through.**

The successful use of encouragement requires adult attitudes of respect, interest in the child’s point of view, and a desire to provide opportunities for children to develop life skills that will lead to self-confident independence from the negative opinions of others.

Article From: <https://www.positivediscipline.com/articles/encouragement-vs-praise>

## How Can Praise Be Negative?

Child care providers may praise children's artwork to help increase their self-esteem. Unfortunately, children sometimes misinterpret teachers' praise. Here are some common misunderstandings.

Children may expect praise every time they create something.

Children may stop forming their own opinions of their artwork and depend instead on the teacher's feedback.

Children whose work is not praised may think you don't like their art and decide they are not good artists.

Children may stop being creative and start creating what they think you will like.

Here's a simple example. Guess what happened when a teacher said, "Oh, look how pretty Karen's painting of a house turned out?" Not surprisingly, many other children tried to copy Karen's idea and style to win the teacher's praise instead of using their own creativity.

## Praise Effort Instead of Product

The best way to give children feedback is to praise effort instead of the product. Help children recognize how hard they worked and encourage them to be proud of their accomplishments.

You might say something like:

"Karen, you are working so long and hard to get it just the way you want it."

"Josie, when you mix blue and red together, you create a new color."

"Tia, you glued those leaves on so carefully. Look at that special design."

"Roberto, when you roll play dough like that, it becomes really long."

"Angela, you had some great ideas for that puppet. I know you are going to enjoy using it with your friends."

Changing how you talk with children about their artwork takes thought and practice. But teachers who intentionally praise children's effort and involvement rather than the product of their artwork are helping support and encourage the children's creativity, thinking skills and sense of self-worth. (From: <http://www.extension.org/pages/25728/>)





## 8 Alternatives to Saying “Good Job” in Response to a Child’s Creation

### 1 | Don’t assume that you know the subject.

Ask the child, “Can you tell me about your painting?”

I’ve been caught many times mistaking a truck for a rollerskating dog, a goblin for a tree, and a donut for a portal into the future. Children love to talk about their work, and this is the perfect time to take advantage of this tendency.

### 2 | Notice the details.

Talk about the shading, lines, colors, and forms that you see in the work.

Responses like, “I see that you added purple to the sky. Tell me more about that. Or, “You put blue dots underwater. Tell me about those.” Invite children to discuss the thinking process behind the artwork.

### 3 | Give feedback about effort.

When you see your child concentrating and adding details to a sketch or scribbling, praise what you notice.

Comments like, “I see you’re putting a lot of thought into those wavy lines.” Or, “You kept working until it was completely finished.” Acknowledge the effort that the child is putting into a piece.

### 4 | Use phrases like, “I noticed…” or, “I see that you…”

Say something that begins a conversation about the artwork.

“I noticed you used lots of blue. Is that your favorite color?” Or, “I see that you added yellow on top of the purple. Why did you decide to do that on this triangle?”

### 5 | Don’t judge the work.

While a child may ask “Do you like it?” respond with a specific detail that appeals to you.

“Those purple clouds remind me of a sunset that I saw last night. Or, “Your truck looks like it could go really fast!”

These are the kind of comments that will encourage further discussion.

### 6 | Celebrate and display work.

Have your child find a place to display the piece. It could be in a frame, magnetic clips on the refrigerator, or scanned into the computer and shared with family.

Celebrations encourage further work, and lead to a sense of success.

### 7 | Encourage next steps.

I’ve seen my share of naked stick figures, and always encourage my students to put some clothes on those people.

The children always think it’s funny, but the comment is meant to encourage them to add more detail to their work. Stretch their thinking and see where they can go next.

### 8 | When you’re not sure what to say, give nonverbal feedback.

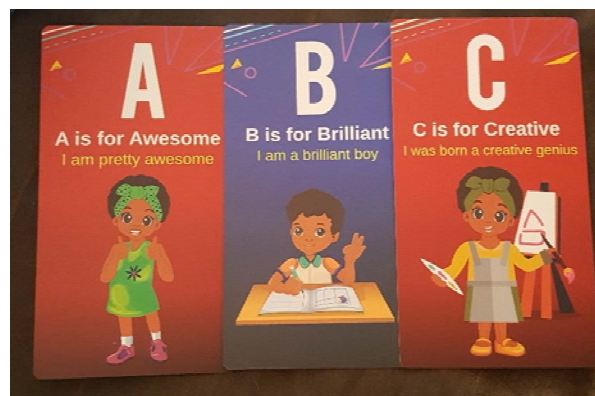
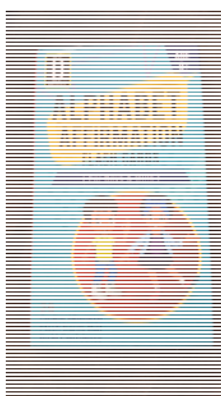
A smile, a pat on the back, a wink or high-five can communicate to your child that you see and acknowledge them and their work. And that’s all they’re really asking for.

Have fun with your budding artist!

From: <https://www.parent.com/8-things-to-say-to-kids-about-their-artwork-instead-of-good-job/>

## Focusing on doing activities that build affirming language can be beneficial!

Here are some alphabet affirmation cards (Found at <https://www.darlynandco.com/>) that teach children self-love and positive language to use with their peers. These can also be placed throughout the classroom to be used as conversation starters.



Discovering who you are and **accepting yourself** is one of the greatest things that you can do to be happy and successful in life. Understanding this needs to start as early as possible. If you’re looking to help your kids with accepting and being themselves, these 16 picture books are a great place to start.

<https://www.sunnydayfamily.com/2018/04/books-about-being-yourself.html>

