

How to Offer Praise to Children to Help Them Achieve

By Mirela Ciobanu, TDSB, Based on the research of Stanford Univ. Professor Dr. Carol Dweck about MINDSET



Praise, Motivation and Achievement

Dear Parents,

Dr Carol Dweck, developmental psychology professor at Stanford University has researched the effect praise has on children for the last twenty years.

Her work has proved that the self-esteem movement of the last decades has only had negative effect on children's motivation and performance. She distinguishes two types of praise that parents, coaches and teachers give:

1. Praise the **intelligence and talent** VS
2. Praise the **effort, the strategy and persistence**

Number 2 is the type of praise children should receive.

"When parents, teachers and coaches label a child, they tell the child that he or she is the label and is judged for this label, not for his actual capabilities. The child becomes risk-averse and doesn't want to chance messing up and being labeled 'dumb.' In other words, a 'smart' child often believes that expending effort is something only 'dumb' kids have to do".

Dr. Carol Dweck



Praise what your children did to reach success: their persistence, focus, strategy and their effort. Do not label them as "smart, talented, geniuses, or the best"

Avoid Labels



1. Avoid: Smart, talented, intelligent, genius, talented. Why?
Children will have little control about this perception and when facing challenges they will most likely give up for fear of losing their status or think that effort is for the “dumb” ones.
2. Avoid labeling yourself. It has a very damaging effect on children, particularly on girls when mothers label themselves as not good at something. (Don’t say, “It’s o.k. I wasn’t good at math in school”. Say, “Let’s try to work on this together”).

The Brain as a Muscle

1. Tell your children that the brain is a muscle that grows with practice. This helps children see how their effort will directly affect their intelligence and will motivate them.
2. Skills and achievement come through effort and persistence. No one is born knowing how to read and play the piano. It takes practice.



You are developing a person and you support their development

1. Praise them for the strategy they used to solve a problem.
2. Praise the effort and focus they put in a challenging assignment
3. Praise the persistence they demonstrated to stick to a challenging task



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When they make mistakes...

Tell them that:

1. When they make mistakes and they focus on them their brain is growing and true learning happens.
2. When mistakes happen their focus should be on how to improve by focusing on them. What a great learning opportunity!
3. Nobody is perfect! Success is the result of failure and hard work. If they get every answer right, the work is too easy and they don’t learn anything.

