

Building Confidence and Self Esteem in Children

Vista School Presentation

March 27, 2014

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Tonight we will explore some ideas and strategies designed to help you build self esteem and confidence within your family. We will take some time to discuss concepts that may prove valuable to you in enriching your family interaction. These concepts are fundamental to being able to incorporate the encouragement strategies that we will also discuss tonight. Benefits of understanding and using these approaches usually include a reduction in misbehavior, an increase in cooperation in the home, and in general a more emotionally safe, loving atmosphere in the home. Please feel free to ask questions or make comments during the hour.

My experience in working with parents is that the more willing you are to look at yourself, your thoughts and behaviors, the more effective you will be in your parenting skills and enhancing your family's life experience in general. It's more about learning how to "be" and less about skills acquisition.

Presentation Goal:

To understand more clearly the basics of how to effectively encourage our children and the concepts that are foundational to those techniques. This encouragement process is essential in helping them build self confidence and have a sense of self worth.

Objectives:

1. Be able to list and understand the three basic emotional goals.
2. Have a working knowledge of the goals of misbehavior and how they fit with the basic emotional goals.
3. Be able to understand the basic differences between praise and encouragement, ego esteem and self esteem and an external locus of control vs. an internal locus of control.
4. To have some basic strategies for moving toward a more encouraging atmosphere in the home, if desired.
5. Be able to able to understand the praise - encouragement continuum.

Foundational Concepts

1. Basic Emotional Goals; (common to all of us)

- a. To **Belong** (loving or being loved is a subset of this)
- b. To be **Unique and Different** (sometimes conflicts with Belonging)
- c. To have a sense of **Meaning & Purpose**

Take a moment and think of at least one of your children, then ask yourself "How does _____ get a sense of belonging?" When you are home later you might take some time and write down a summary of each of your children's strategies with notes on how you believe they belong, try to be unique and how they get meaning and purpose in life. There are a number of different ways to meet these goals.

2. **Misbehavior vs. Inappropriate Behavior**. Remember children who misbehave are almost always discouraged and/or pampered and this will be reflected in how they meet their basic goals.

The reason that we call it misbehavior is that it will have all of the following;

- a) breaks a rule, value, law or guideline,
- b) exists in a pattern, repeats,
- c) bothers us.

This is not "trying on behavior", or "inappropriate behavior" which can sometimes be frustrating, but will usually have a different feel about it compared to misbehavior. We respond differently to misbehavior than we do with trying on behavior. Please remember that all behavior is intentional or has purpose, but not often consciously motivated.

(Read "The Happiness Hypothesis" by Jonathan Haidt, or the "Biology of Belief" by Bruce Lipton)

3. Goals of Misbehavior are ways to belong, to be different and get meaning.

- a. to get **Attention** (you feel annoyed, frustrated)
- b. to get **Power** (you feel challenged, angry)
- c. to get **Revenge** or counter hurt (you feel hurt, angry)
- d. to **appear Disabled/Inadequate** (you feel helpless/hopeless)

for teens we can add four more

- e. to feel superior (you feel threatened, less than)
- f. to experience excitement (you feel afraid for them)
- g. to have peer acceptance (you feel excluded, betrayed)
- h. to escape, find comfort (you feel frustrated, fed up)

4. Encouragement Basics

a. Encouragement is different from praise, and understanding those differences is fundamental to effective encouragement processes with your children and others. Remember that praise generates and reinforces an external locus of control, whereas encouragement produces and reinforces an internal locus of control. (Ego Esteem versus Self Esteem) Praise will always have a component of judgment in it.

b. Encouragement is most effective at neutral times. If you try to encourage as a result of something that the child has done/accomplished it's very easy to fall back into a praise posture with them, due to the focus being on the accomplishment and your attempts to reinforce that, rather than encourage the child.

c. Encouragement is focused on nurturing an "internal locus of control" within your child(ren). It's about helping them to develop and then use an internal compass or referent point for confidence and self esteem, rather than depending on others to define them. Unwittingly most parents promote an external locus as a way to exert influence or control over the child, and then panic when the child transfers that locus to from them to peers, especially if the peers have a different value set.

d. To be most effective at the encouragement process you will benefit from understanding your strategies for goal fulfillment and how they might predict and influence your interactional styles with your children.

How do you belong, get significance and influence in your life?

How are you different from others around you?

What do you think and do to have a sense of meaning in your life?

How might those answers impact the way you interact with your children? Think of both pros and cons about the way that you generally try to achieve those goals.

e. Be kind to yourself in the process of amplifying encouragement in the home, and allow for some "clunkiness" in the delivery process. Stay upbeat and optimistic about enhancing the family and let the new approach blossom over time. Remember it's not a singular event, it's a process of thought and behavior that builds into positive behavior patterns over time.

Praise and Encouragement Comparison

Praise (reinforces an External Locus of Control)

1. Is a reward and has to be earned, therefore is conditional.
2. Teaches others to act to please. (right things for the wrong reasons)
3. Teaches to compete with others, (not enough room for everyone)
4. Uses words that judge, "you are such a smart kid. . ."
5. Does little for self esteem because it is performance based.
6. Produces ego esteem. (I am what I do, own, etc)
7. Produces distance and vertical qualities in relationships (POWER)
8. Looks for conformity to the "ideal", doesn't celebrate differences.
9. Comes from a need to control or manage.
10. Focus on "HUMAN DOING", (performance & doing)
11. Teaches competition at the expense of closeness.

Encouragement (reinforces an Internal Locus of Control)

1. Is a gift, doesn't have to be earned
2. Uses words that notice how a youth feels.
3. Can be used when a child isn't doing well in performance.
4. Raises self esteem because the child feels valued for who they are not what they do.
5. Enhances equality in relationships
6. Teaches respect.
7. Appreciates the difference in the people.
8. Comes from love and concern.
9. Focuses on "HUMAN BEING", (feelings & "beingness")
10. Teaches cooperation.

Keys to Help Your Children Perceive That You Love Them

1. Show actions that let the child know that you really care for them. Talk, kiss, hug, give, listen, tell, feed, touch, in short do something **that is visible**.
2. Be very careful how you choose to motivate your child... Are you trustworthy or manipulative?
3. Be aware that **timing is essential** in dealing with children and even more so with teens. What you do at one time might not be appropriate at another time.
4. Consider all options and choices in your behavior, **become much more proactive and less reactive**. Are you arbitrary or flexible?
5. Understand that **your child knows who benefits from each interaction**, more than you may give them credit for. Work always toward a WIN/WIN relationship.
6. Under gird all of the above with **respect and patience**.

Remember that the only evaluation that counts is how your children perceive your feelings toward them. Whether you believe that you are a loving, kind parent may have little to do with your impact upon the child. Are you respectful to your children, do you treat them with dignity and kindness?

A Few Encouragement Techniques

1. **Date Night**... spend one evening with one child, doing what they choose within your parameters. Rotate with all your children. One on one is the key to success for this activity.
2. **Nights Up**... each child can stay up as late as they want one night per week. (Prearranged) This stays in effect as long as they are up the next day and do not miss school, chores, etc. You may stay up with them, or you may go to bed. No friends over, no leaving the house, and other guides as you see fitting.
3. **Talk Time**... one half hour per youth, per week where you talk, one on one, with your children. This is not the Spanish Inquisition!! You are not interviewing them, but you are talking with them, and are open to feedback from them. Ask them how you are doing as a parent, use the Parent Report Card, etc.
4. **Garbage Jar**...place a jar with a notepad and pen next to it. Challenge all family members to write down the differences/arguments/quarrels that they are having and then process it during family meeting and not during the week. This should be a time limited process and focus on understanding.
5. **Cultural Exchange Night**... meet with your youth/child and plan an evening to listen to some of the music they like, and then some that you like. Either take turns with songs, or time limit each round. Talk about why you like the music, **DO NOT BE SARCASTIC OR DEGRADING IN ANY WAY**. The key to working with youth, especially teens is to show respect. Look for

something that you can appreciate in the music. (This may also work for food, types of recreation, etc.) Stay away from judgment.

Encouraging Phrases

(The Language of Encouragement from Dinkmeyer)

Phrases that say: "I accept you"

1. You seem to like chess a lot!
2. How do you feel about that?
3. I can tell you're pleased about that.
4. I can see you're not satisfied. What do you think we can do so you'll feel happier with it?
5. It looks like you enjoyed that.
6. You did your best – that's all anyone can do.
7. I enjoy your sense of humor.
8. It's nice that you enjoy learning.

"I know you can"

1. You can do it; you made it partway already.
2. You're making progress
3. I trust your judgment.
4. That's a tough one, but I think you can figure it out.
5. I need your help fixing this.
6. You'll figure it out.
7. Knowing you, I'm sure you'll do fine.

"I see that you are working and improving."

1. You worked hard on that.
2. You're getting better at fractions all the time.
3. Look at the progress that you've made.
4. Looks like you've spent a lot of time thinking that one through.
5. I see you're moving along.
6. You may not feel like you've reached your goal, but look how far you've come.

"I appreciate you."

1. I needed your help and you came through.
2. Thanks! That was a big help.
3. It was thoughtful of you to do that.
4. I really appreciate it when you help me. It makes grocery shopping a lot easier.
5. I need your help planning the picnic.
6. You have skill in _____.
7. Would you do that for the family?
8. I really enjoyed _____ thanks!

How Self Esteem is Nourished

Self esteem is nourished when teachers/parents;

1. show caring and love by direct actions
2. allow for individual differences
3. appreciate uniqueness
4. communicate openly and honestly
5. actively look for opportunities to encourage
6. have a sense of humor/avoid the use of sarcasm
7. recognize it is okay to make mistakes
8. find ways to support others
9. share responsibilities rather than blame
10. understand that kids must differentiate to grow

Remember that during school years children/youth discover their own way of doing things. They may develop strong dislikes and likes. You can continue to nourish their self esteem by giving them more choices and accepting their preferences whenever possible. Encourage them to take reasonable risks, and help them make the connection of accepting responsibility and developing independence.

As children mature and enter into adolescence the **developmental task of differentiation becomes more and more important. Adults that are invested in having their own personal "okayness" being based on a youths compliance to their wishes will soon become easy targets for the youth in a NORMAL DEVELOPMENT process.** This is when it becomes vital for the parent/teacher to separate the business from the friendship/love of the relationship. If a parent/teacher is using anger in working with a child, it is usually a telltale sign that the adult is into ego esteem issues and that the child has been given incredible power over the adult. No one wins in a power struggle.

EGO ESTEEM VS SELF ESTEEM

EGO ESTEEM: (often emerges from praising and/or shaming which produce a need to have approval from others, an external locus of control))

is based on the formulation and reinforcement of some variation of the following inner sentences or core beliefs of the individual;

I AM WHAT I **DO or HAVE**... (can include looks, intelligence, money, belonging to certain organizations, etc.)

MY "OKAYNESS" IS BASED ON HOW WELL I PERFORM TASKS...

I'm only OK IF I LOOK GOOD/HOT ETC. . .

I AM ONLY OK IF I HAVE THINGS . . .

I AM WHAT OTHERS TELL ME I AM... (so more than just approval, this includes identity)

IF I DO THINGS WELL THEN PEOPLE WILL LIKE ME...

IF PEOPLE LIKE ME, THEN I MUST BE OKAY. . .

IF PEOPLE RESPECT ME, THEN I'M OKAY . . .

I MUST BE IN CONTROL...

I WILL BE OKAY WHEN... (some type of achievement that will bring. . .)

IT IS IMPORTANT TO BLAME EITHER MYSELF OR OTHERS... (blaming is often used to "motivate" when a personal is out of balance and heavily invested in ego esteem)

There is a sense of never being able to do enough, burnout and discouragement are both high with ego esteem. Remember that research indicates that when children misbehave they are almost always discouraged. Any system that is discouraging will enhance the chances for misbehavior. Children that have courage make mistakes, but their misbehavior is minimal. Persons with high ego esteem tend to blame or shame themselves and others. Remember this

is reinforced by an external locus of control, or factors outside the self determine whether the person feels okay or not.

SELF ESTEEM: (Originates from believing that we are ok, just because we are... reinforced by encouragement, NOT PRAISE. Is indicative of an internal locus of control.)

This is unconditional acceptance of self worth. You know that you are valuable just because you are. Self esteem addresses the issue of **being**. Inner sentences or core beliefs of a person with good self esteem might look like;

I AM OKAY JUST **BECAUSE I AM**...

I AM A GOOD PERSON...

I AM ACCEPTING OF MY OWN AND OTHERS MISTAKES...

LIFE HAS MEANING AND PURPOSE FOR ME...

I CAN RESPECT MYSELF AND OTHERS...

I AM SELF CONTROLLED...

WHAT I DO IS NOT WHO I AM...

Children with high self esteem value themselves and others, and **seldom get into blaming or defensiveness**. Misbehavior is minimal because the courage level is high. They seem to have the ability to self regulate more effectively than individuals that are more invested in ego esteem.

Remember that current research suggests that individuals who have a good balance between ego esteem and self esteem tend to be more courageous, perform better at tasks in general, sports, academic endeavors and are usually more cooperative with others.

**Book List for
Encouragement skills and concepts**

"The lesson of spiritual practice is not about gaining knowledge, but about how we love"
Kornfield

<u>The Skills of Encouragement</u>	Dinkmeyer & Losconcy
<u>How You Feel is Up to You</u>	McKay and Dinkmeyer
<u>Punished By Rewards</u>	Kohn
<u>The Brighter Side of Human Nature</u>	Kohn
<u>No Contest, the Case Against Competition</u>	Kohn
<u>Emotional Intelligence</u>	Goleman
<u>Parenting Young Children : Systematic</u>	
<u>Training for Effective Parenting Children Under Six</u>	Dinkmeyer & McKay
<u>Raising a Responsible Child</u>	McKay & Dinkmeyer
<u>The Parent's Handbook</u>	Dinkmeyer & McKay
<u>Positive Discipline</u>	Nelsen
<u>The Happiness Hypothesis</u>	Haidt
<u>A General Theory of Love</u>	Lewis, Amini & Lannon
<u>The Biology of Belief</u>	Lipton
<u>Raising Self Reliant Children in a Self Indulgent World</u>	Glenn

What Kids Need to Succeed (Revised 3rd Edition) Benson