

While January is a month to set goals, hit the reset button, or change something you don't like about the old you or the past year, let's take a moment to celebrate the great job you are doing as a parent! Yesterday, today, and most likely tomorrow...you do your best to make sure that your children are feeling supported and taken care of, and that is not something to ignore or shake a stick at! Sometimes we deserve a little praise, even for the small stuff, even just because! As we ease into 2020, be sure to recognize and acknowledge all the good that you are doing as a parent. Because, as we know, it's one of the toughest jobs on the planet!

Speaking of praise, this month we are going to talk about how to offer praise and positive feedback to our kids and how to teach them to give and receive compliments, because everyone—kids and adults alike—thrive on that feel-good feeling when someone notices us, encourages us, and recognizes us for who we are and what we do.

Every day, we can have strong feelings or emotions that can be communicating our discomfort and lack of coping skills. But our behavior does not define us, and reinforcing our child's innate self-worth (as well as our own) can help them understand that they are worthy of love and acceptance no matter what—no matter how awful or hard the day was.

Research shows that the most motivating compliments for children are those that praise hard work, the process they use to reach goals, and traits like perseverance and dedication. This type of praise can be so much more than "good job" and means more when it is detailed and specific. But, be sure to give other compliments, too, such as how kind their hearts are, how their smiles brighten your day, how amazing they are in general, how beautiful their eyes are, how much you appreciate them, etc.

When it comes to receiving compliments, have you noticed that we're not that great at accepting them in this society? "Oh, this old thing? It's not that great." Or when being thanked for something we have done, our response is often, "It's no big deal." As adults, we tend to feel guilty or feel uncomfortable or thrown off when someone says something nice to us; so much so that we may respond with trying to talk the other person out of thinking what they just said. We need to change that trend and help our kids receive compliments graciously by starting early and letting them know how and why it's important to receive and accept compliments.

Here are some 'complimentary' ☺ ideas for complimenting and praising your child:

1. **Compliment when they choose kindness.** *"I don't always remember to tell you, but you are an awesome kid, and I appreciate the way you listen and treat people."*
2. **Praise making a good decision.** *When they demonstrate honesty, kindness, trustworthiness, and reliability, that's a great time to take them aside and offer a sincere compliment.*
3. **Compliment them for simply being them.** *"I'm thankful that I'm your mom!" Kids need to understand that they are valued simply because they are.*
4. **Praise their effort.** *"This is one clean room!" "I'm so glad you take this job so seriously--it shows." "Your willingness to help is so appreciated!"*
5. **Praise trying something new or facing a fear.** *"You really put yourself out there and tried your best!" "I know you were nervous about that, and it is so awesome that you tried!"*

Everyone deserves a little praise—You're awesome! You're a great parent!—Give your kids, and yourself, permission to believe that. Happy New Year!

*~If you continue to have concerns, contact your school counselor to make a plan for a success—they're full of ideas, and are always in your corner!~*