



## Using Praise for a Growth Mind-set

According to a survey we conducted in the mid-1990s, 85 percent of parents believed that praising children's ability or intelligence when they perform well is important for making them feel smart. But our work shows that praising a child's intelligence makes a child fragile and defensive. So, too, does generic praise that suggests a stable trait, such as "You are a good artist."

Praise is very valuable, however, if it is carefully worded. Praise for the specific process a child used to accomplish something fosters motivation and confidence by focusing children on the actions that lead to success.

Such process praise may involve commending effort, strategies, focus, persistence in the face of difficulty, and willingness to take on challenges. Here are some examples:

- You did a good job drawing. I like the detail you added to the people's faces.
- You really studied for your social studies test. You read the material over several times, outlined it and tested yourself on it. It really worked!
- I like the way you tried a lot of different strategies on that math problem until you finally got it.

- That was a hard English assignment, but you stuck with it until you got it done. You stayed at your desk and kept your concentration. That's great!
- I like that you took on that challenging project for your science class. It will take a lot of work—doing the research, designing the apparatus, making the parts and building it. You are going to learn a lot of great things.

Parents and teachers can also teach children to enjoy the process of learning by expressing positive views of challenges, effort and mistakes. Here are examples of such communications:

- "Boy, this is hard—this is fun."
- "Oh, sorry, that was too easy—no fun. Let's do something more challenging that you can learn from."
- "Let's all talk about what we struggled with today and learned from. I'll go first."
- "Mistakes are so interesting. Here's a wonderful mistake. Let's see what we can learn from it."

From the work of Carol Dweck