

## The American Counseling Association's "*Counseling Corner*" Weekly Columns

### Telling Your Kids You're Proud Of Them

from the American Counseling Association

As parents most of us are proud of our children but recent studies have found that we don't always do a good job of communicating that feeling. That's unfortunate because when kids are aware of the pride their parents have in them the result is usually a much stronger relationship. And a stronger relationship can be important as our kids get older, want more independence and often find themselves in conflict with parental rules and regulations.

So how does one go about effectively communicating the pride that you feel for a son or daughter? One starting point is not to praise everything, especially the low-effort accomplishments that your child knows isn't really worthy of praise ("Great job of finishing that bowl of cereal, kiddo!").

Offering praise for things that really aren't challenging and really aren't much of an accomplishment ends up turning all of our praise into "white noise," background words that don't carry much meaning or worth and which our kids often ignore.

One hint that experts offer on effective ways to communicate pride in your child is to focus on the process, rather than simply on the outcome. When a child is working hard and putting in extra effort, a parent offering praise is heard and appreciated. What you are doing is highlighting the effort and initiative of your child, rather than focusing on only the results.

When we praise our kids for putting in that extra effort, it becomes a reward that reinforces the work they're doing and makes it more likely that they will want to continue to try as hard in the future.

It's important not to simply assume that our kids are aware that we're proud of them. And it is also important to find a correct balance between offering too little or too much praise. We have to recognize when a child is pushing himself or herself to try something new or to work a little harder. That's the time to compliment and let your child see how pleased you are of the effort they're making. The end result may not be a first place trophy or any measurable success, but you want your child to know you're proud of his or her trying.

It's important for parents to be proud of their children and what they do. But it's even more important that that pride is clearly communicated.

*"Counseling Corner" is provided by the American Counseling Association. Comments and questions to ACAcorner@counseling.org or visit the ACA website at www.counseling.org.*

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