

Gushy Praise – Cut It Out!

How often do you stop and notice something positive that your child is doing? If you tend to focus on the negative try to *Cut it Out*, or at least, cut it down. Take note of the number of times you give your child negative feedback about his behaviour in the course of a day. If you find yourself correcting, nagging and criticizing, jot down the areas that you focus on. Now ask yourself how you can turn things around so that you minimize the negative exchanges and increase the positive comments. Catch your child doing something positive in one of these areas.

Avoid using evaluative, gushy praise, “Oh you are such a good boy.” or “What a wonderful job you have done here, this is fantastic!” Both responses will backfire, as it is important not to make evaluative comments when a child is performing a task -just give feedback. When a child feels judged, even if it’s positively, he tends to become self-critical. Praise can backfire when it involves evaluation rather than just observation and appreciation.



USE AND MISUSE OF PRAISE

Positive Use	Misuse
Specific (descriptive)	Unspecific (general)
Sincere (honest)	Insincere (false)
Non-Evaluative	Evaluative
Encouraging	Perfectionistic

Describe what you see, “I notice you sharing your toys this morning.” or “You got dressed and grabbed your knapsack without being asked this morning.” or “I notice you wiped the kitchen counter.” Children feel encouraged when you notice their positive effort. Shifting your focus to the positive teaches them what you want, increases their self-esteem and improves the parent- child relationship.

This works well in other relationships too. How often do you express sincere appreciation to your partner, your colleague or somebody who has provided a service? Specific feedback gives people information about what they are doing that is working. We all benefit from a positive approach. What positive action have you noticed today?