

Are these techniques breaking your child's confidence?

TRADITIONAL PRAISE	WHAT IT REALLY CONVEYS
Oh what a nice picture! That's lovely! Really beautiful.	Using relative adjective words like "nice, lovely, good, beautiful, etc" have no meaning in themselves and create much miscommunication. The word "beautiful" may mean something quite different to your child and therefore your praise is not powerful.
What a good boy you are.	The child's response: What does my achievement have to do with my gender? Does that mean that if I don't do it well then I am a bad boy?
I am so proud of you.	The child's response: This is actually all about you and what I think is not important as long as you are satisfied.
You must be so proud of yourself.	The child's response : It sounds like you are proud and you think that if I am not proud then I must be stupid.
Thanks for doing such great work.	The child's response: What does great work mean? That it took me 30 minutes to do 2 hours of work, or that I got it all correct, or that I did it even though I would have preferred to play outside?
I really like it.	The child's response: What does that mean? That you like the colours, that you like the form, and why make this about you AGAIN?
That's even better than you did yesterday	The child's response: So my worth is only acknowledged if my results improve. What happens when I fail?
You do that better than everyone else!	The child's response: Oh no! Now I have the stress of trying to keep in front of everyone else as well. And, you only value my work when it's compared to others.
Even though this is good, I know you can do so much better.	The child's response: Thanks for nothing. You are judging me according to your criteria and don't know even why I did it this way. I actually feel this is better so it proves you don't really know me at all.
I expected this from you as you always do so well.	The child's response : Great so now I can't just be me. And I had better not disappoint you or it will break your heart.
You're so good because you don't disappointment me with the results you get.	The child's response: It doesn't seem to matter what I do as long as you are not disappointed. So this is all about you AGAIN.

OTHER REASONS WHY TRADITIONAL PRAISING TECHNIQUES FAIL

You don't say anything because you don't think it is that good.

You don't say anything because you think they can do better.

You don't say anything because you are worried that over praising your child will set them up for false expectations and failure later on.

You don't want to praise something because you don't know what they have actually drawn in the first place.

You don't want to praise because you don't want to tell a lie or be inauthentic.

Even though they had lots of fun doing it, you think the final result doesn't show that they learnt much from it so they should have been doing something more constructive instead.

You praise something you really like but can see your child doesn't believe you.

You really mean it but they wonder what you want from them.

You praise them but they deny it and put themselves down even more.

How to avoid the traditional praising techniques that actually damage your child's self esteem.

TRADITIONAL PRAISE	DESCRIPTIVE PRAISE
Traditional praise is limiting because it focuses on the extrinsic: our good opinion or comparison with others in the class, a predetermined criteria.	Descriptive Praise promotes self-motivation, personal achievement and independent action.
Traditional praise is a reward for a completed achievement.	Descriptive praise is an acknowledgement of effort.
Traditional praise tells children they've satisfied the demands of others.	Descriptive praise helps children evaluate their own performances.
Traditional praise connects children's work with their personal worth, inviting fear of failure.	Descriptive praise focuses on the strengths of the work, helping children feel confident in and able to assess their own strengths.
Traditional praise, however warm, places a value judgement on the child as a person. It is patronising, implying that I have the right to judge you.	Descriptive praise shows acceptance and respect, and is a message between equals.
Traditional praise can be withheld as a punishment, or cheapened by overuse.	Descriptive praise can be given freely, because everyone deserves it.
Traditional praise is often generalised.	Descriptive praise is specific to the action or behaviour.
Traditional praise depends on external evaluation.	Descriptive praise helps the child to set his own goals.
Sometimes when we praise, we send a subtly restrictive message: "You are worthwhile only when you do things well" or "I like people who can do things better than others".	Descriptive Praise has a far broader base.
A child who has become dependent on traditional praise, may think, "To be worthwhile, I must do what you want". Often children who become dependent on traditional praise, believe that they have value only when they meet the standards of other people. It can lead to anxiety, "My teacher approves of me because I got high marks. Will she still value me if I make mistakes?"	When we use descriptive praise we lead children to evaluate themselves, to take responsibility for feeling worthwhile.
Traditional praise focuses on the result and uses competition.	Descriptive praise focuses on effort and process.