

Beyond Praise: Building Character and Increasing Resiliency

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- Don't feel bad.
- We weren't given a book to learn how to parent.
- We have done the best we can.
- Good news! It is easy to fix.

We have been doing it WRONG!

Objective

- **Learn how to use praise as parents to build resilient and successful children.**

Messages About Success

- Listen for the messages in the following examples:
 - “You learned that so quickly! You’re so smart!”
 - “Look at that drawing. Martha, is he the next Picasso or what?”
 - “You’re so brilliant, you got an A without even studying!”

If you’re like most parents, you hear these as supportive, self-esteem messages.

Messages About Success

- But listen more closely. See if you can hear another message. It's the ones that children hear:
 - “If I don't learn something quickly, I'm not smart.”
 - “I shouldn't try drawing anything hard or they'll see I'm no Picasso.”
 - “I'd better quit studying or they won't think I'm brilliant.”

The Research

- A group of researchers went into New York Public Schools to test **400** fifth graders.

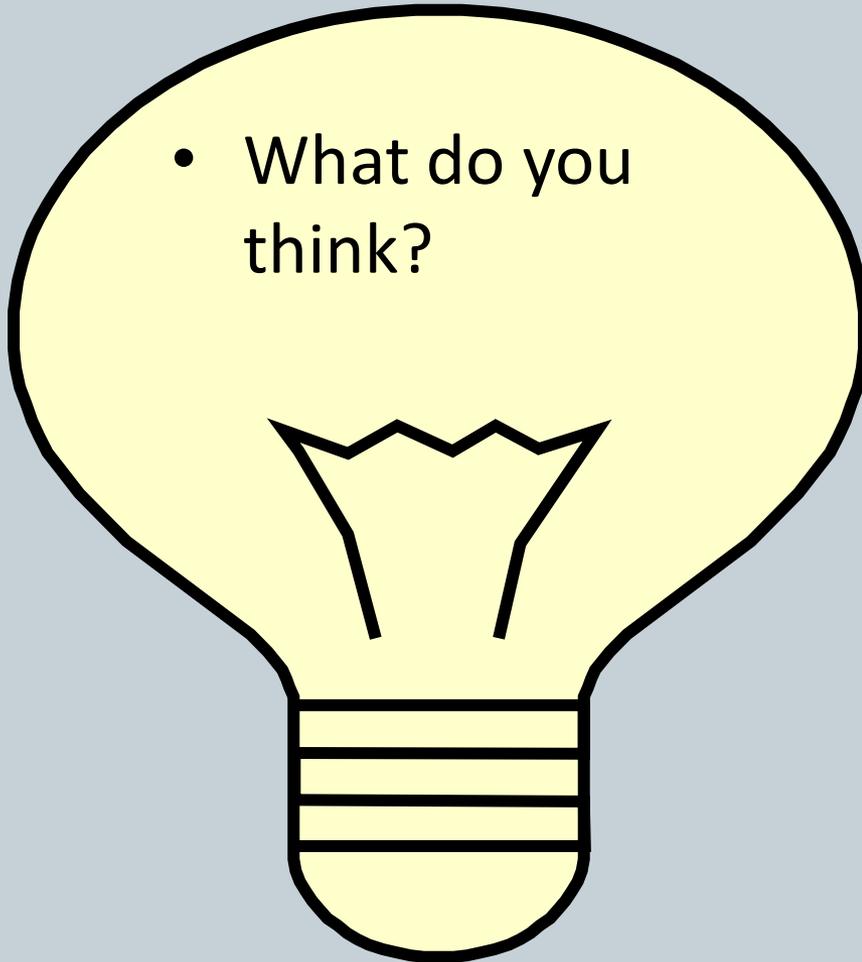
First Round

- Students were given nonverbal IQ test consisting of a series of puzzles—puzzles easy enough that all the children would do fairly well.
- Once the child finished the test, the researchers told each student his score, then gave him a single line of praise.
- Some were praised for their intelligence. They were told, “*You must be smart at this.*”
- Other students were praised for their effort: “*You must have worked really hard.*”

Second Round

- Students were give a choice.
 - One choice was a test that would be more difficult than the first, but the researchers told the kids that they'd learn a lot from attempting the puzzles.
 - The other choice was an easy test, just like the first.

Second Round



- What do you think?

- Which choice did those praised for their *effort* make? Did they choose the *easy* test or *hard* test?
- Which choice did those praised for their *intelligence* make? Did they choose the *easy* test or *hard* test?

Second Round: What Happened?

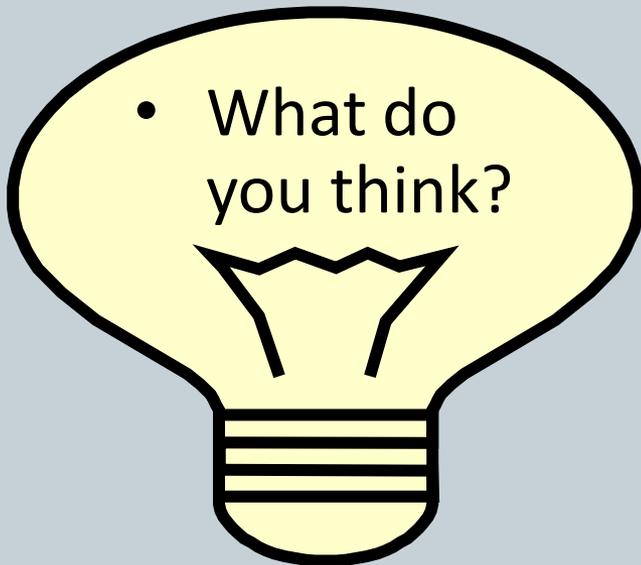
- Of those praised for their effort, 90% chose the harder set of puzzles.
- Of those praised for their intelligence, a majority chose the easy test.
- The “smart” kids took the cop-out.

Second Round: Why did this happen?

- “When we praise children for their intelligence,” Dweck wrote in her study summary, “we tell them that this is the name of the game: Look smart, don’t risk making mistakes.”
- And that’s what the fifth-graders had done: They’d chosen to **look smart** and **avoid the risk of being embarrassed.**

Third Round

- The test was difficult, designed for kids two years ahead of their grade level.
- Predictably, everyone failed.



How do you think the kids who were praised for their effort react?

How did the kids praised for their intelligence react?

Third Round: What Happened?

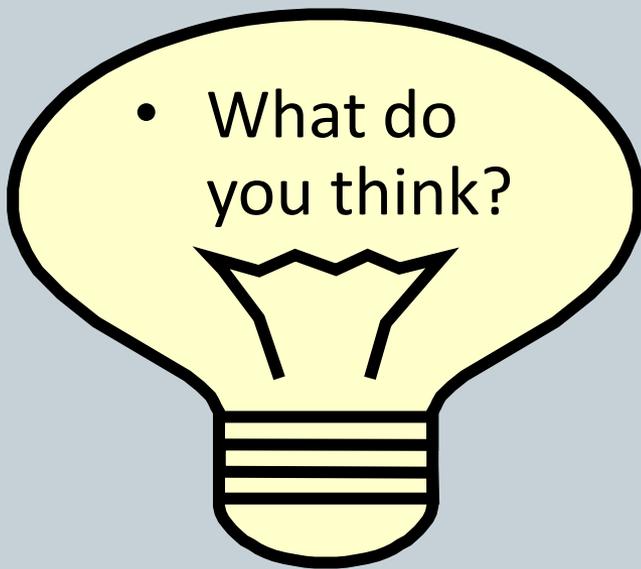
- Those praised for their *effort* on the first test assumed they simply hadn't focused hard enough on this test. "They got very involved, willing to try every solution to the puzzles," Dweck recalled.
- *"Many of them remarked, unprovoked, 'This is my favorite test.' "*

Third Round

- Not so for those praised for their *smarts*.
- They assumed their failure was evidence that they weren't really smart at all.
- “Just watching them, you could see the strain. *They were sweating and miserable.*”

Fourth Round

- Dweck's researchers then gave all the fifth-graders a final round of tests that were engineered to be as *easy* as the first round.



How do you think the kids who were praised for their *effort* do on the test?

How did the kids praised for their *intelligence* do on the test?

Fourth Round: What Happened?

- Those who had been praised for their *effort* significantly improved on their first score—by about **30 percent**.
- Those who'd been told they were *smart* did worse than they had at the very beginning—by about **20 percent**.

Why Did this Happen?

- “Emphasizing *effort* gives a child a variable that they can control,” she explains. “They come to see themselves as *in control* of their success. “
- “Emphasizing natural *intelligence* takes it *out of the child’s control*, and it provides no good recipe for responding to a failure.”

Why Did this Happen?

- In follow-up interviews, Dweck discovered that those who think that innate intelligence is the key to success begin to discount the importance of effort. *I am smart*, the kids' reasoning goes; *I don't need to put out effort*. Expenditure of effort becomes stigmatized—it's public proof that you can't cut it on your natural gifts.

Sincerity of Praise Matters

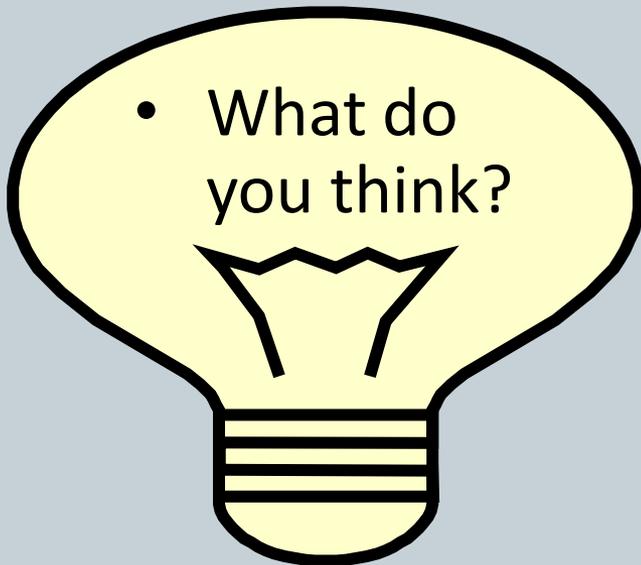
- Children over the age of seven can tell if you mean what you say when you praise them.
- For example, telling my son he did a great job after he played a lousy game of baseball isn't sincere.

Research Says: Sincerity Matters

- Psychologist Wulf-Uwe Meyer, a pioneer in the field conducted a series of studies where children watched other **students receive praise**.
- According to Meyer's findings, by the age of 12, children believe that ***earning praise from a teacher*** is not a sign you did ***well—it's actually a sign you lack ability and the teacher thinks you need extra encouragement***.
- And teens, Meyer found, discounted praise to such an extent that they believed ***it's a teacher's criticism—not praise at all—that really conveys a positive belief in a student's aptitude***.

Is Too Much Praise Bad?

- Do we want *persistence* in our children?
- *Persistence*-A firm belief that the way to bounce back from failure is to work harder.



Is too much praise bad for kids? Why or why not?



Barcelona'92



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Research Says: Too Much Praise Is Bad?

- “A person who grows up getting too frequent rewards *will not have persistence*, because they’ll quit when the rewards disappear.”

So, How do I Praise My Child?

- **Be specific.** Instead of saying, "You're such a good baseball player," say, "You hit the ball really hard."
- **Praise their effort.** "You worked hard every night on those spelling words, and you did well on the test."
- **Focus on the process used.** "You practiced your spelling words all week long, and you got a 100% on your spelling test."

So, How do I Praise My Child?

- **Be genuine.** Praise should always be genuine.
- Kids have a way of knowing when your praise is insincere, and you lose trust.
- Worse yet, they become insecure because they don't believe your positive words, and they find difficulty in telling the difference between when you really mean it and when you don't.

So, How do I Praise My Child?

- **Encourage new activities.**
- Praise kids for trying new things, like learning to bike ride or tie their shoelaces, and for not being afraid to make mistakes.

Embrace Failure

- **Embrace Failure.**
- Nine-year-old Elizabeth was on her way to her first gymnastics meet. Lanky, flexible, and energetic, she was just right for gymnastics, and she loved it. Of course, she was a little nervous about competing, but ***she was good at gymnastics and felt confident of doing well.*** She had even thought about the perfect place in her room to hang the ribbon she would win.
- In the first event, the floor exercises, Elizabeth went first. Although she did a nice job, the scoring changed after the first few girls and she lost.
- Elizabeth also did well in the other events, but not well enough to win. By the end of the evening, she had received no ribbons and was devastated.

Embrace Failure

- **What would you do if you were Elizabeth's parents?**
 - Tell Elizabeth you thought she was the best.
 - Tell her she was robbed of a ribbon that was rightfully hers.
 - Reassure her that gymnastics is not that important
 - Tell her she has the ability and will surely win next time.
 - Tell her she didn't deserve to win.

Embrace Failure

- The first **(you thought she was the best)** is insincere. She was not the best – you know it, and she does too. This offers her no recipe for how to recover or how to improve.
- The second **(she was robbed)** places blame on others, when in fact the problem was mostly with her performance, not the judges. Do you want her to grow up blaming others?
- The third **(reassure her that gymnastics doesn't really matter)** teaches her to devalue something if she doesn't do well in it right away.
- The fourth **(she has the ability)** may be the most dangerous message of all. Does ability automatically take you where you want to go? If Elizabeth didn't win this meet, why should she win the next one?
- The last option **(tell her she didn't deserve to win)** seems hardhearted under the circumstances. And of course you wouldn't say it quite that way but it is the message that embraces failure.

Ask Questions!

- What was the hardest part of your day? What did you learn from it?
- What mistakes did you make today? What did you learn from it?
- What strategy helped you win the game or get an A on the test?
- What can you learn from losing the game? What can you learn from that failing grade?
- How can you improve for next time?

Tell Stories of Others Who Failed or Exerted Effort

- **Thomas Edison's** teachers said he was "too stupid to learn anything." He was fired from his first two jobs for being "non-productive."
- As an inventor, Edison made 1,000 unsuccessful attempts at inventing the light bulb.
- When a reporter asked, "How did it feel to fail 1,000 times?" Edison replied, "**I didn't fail 1,000 times. The light bulb was an invention with 1,000 steps.**"

Tell Stories of Others Who Failed or Exerted Effort

- **Walt Disney** was fired by a newspaper editor because "he lacked imagination and had no good ideas."
- He went bankrupt several times before he built Disneyland.
- In fact, the proposed park was rejected by the city of Anaheim on the grounds that it would only attract riffraff.

Tell Stories of Others Who Failed or Exerted Effort

- As a young man, **Abraham Lincoln** went to war a captain and returned a private.
- Afterwards, he was a failure as a businessman.
- As a lawyer in Springfield, he was too impractical and temperamental to be a success.
- He turned to politics and was defeated in his first try for the legislature, again defeated in his first attempt to be nominated for congress, defeated in his application to be commissioner of the General Land Office, defeated in the senatorial election of 1854, defeated in his efforts for the vice-presidency in 1856, and defeated in the senatorial election of 1858.

The 10,000 Hour Rule

- All people successful in their respective fields all have one thing — just one thing — in common: they have spent at least 10,000 hours learning and internalizing and perfecting their crafts.

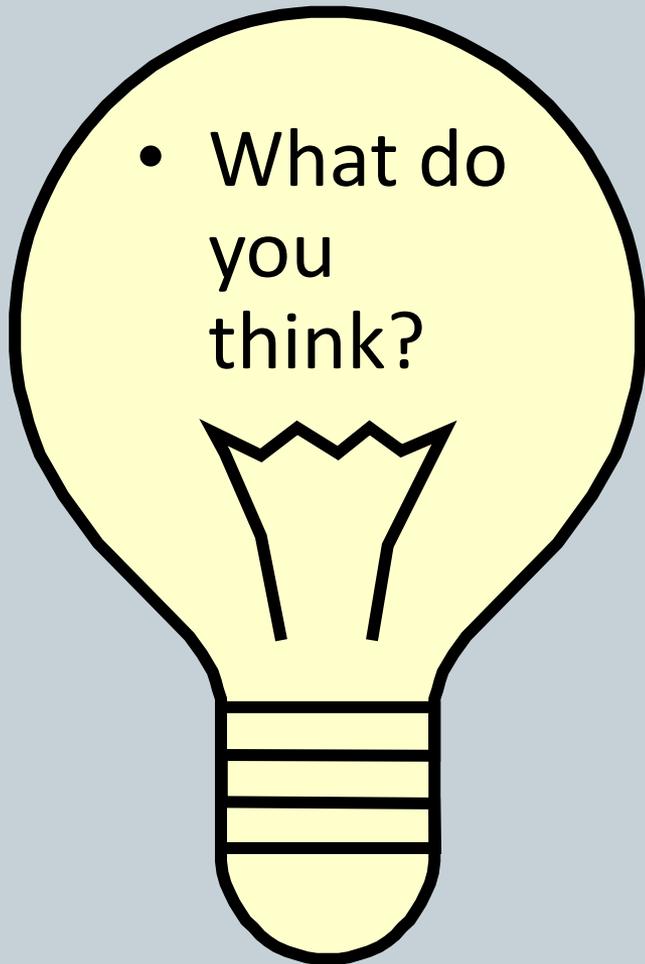
Effort is what counts!

Explain How the Brain Works



- Explain how the brain works to your child.
- Neurons in our brain grow new pathways and more connections as we learn.
- As they practice and exert effort, their brain is actually growing and getting bigger.

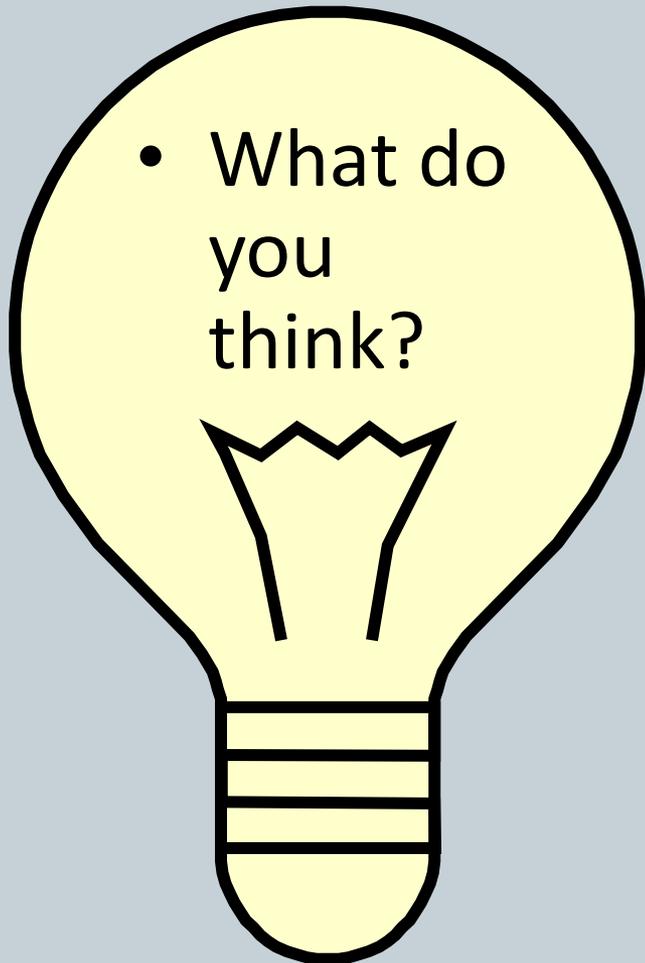
Your Turn



- What do you think?

- Your child comes home with a 100% on their test.
- Your child did not study. He already knew all of the material. It was too easy.
- What do you say?

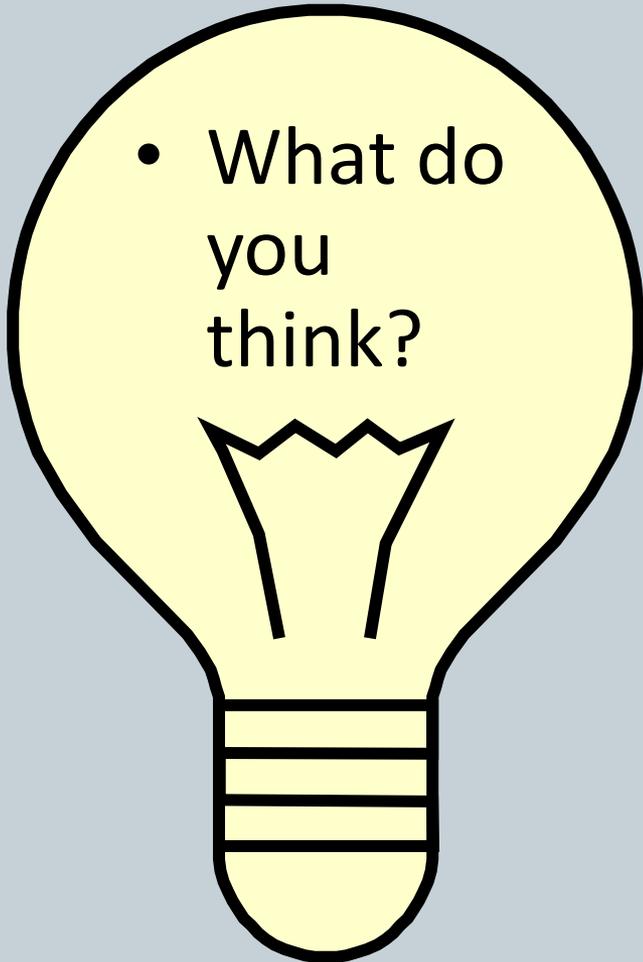
Your Turn



- What do you think?

- Your child comes home with a very good report card.
- He has been doing all of his homework and reading his textbooks every night even on weekends.
- What do you say?

Your Turn



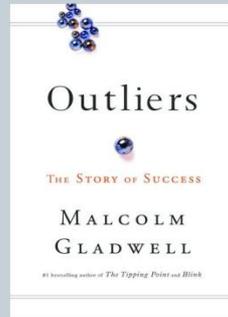
- What do you think?

- Your child strikes out a bat every time for the last five baseball games.
- He hates baseball. He throws the bat when he strikes out. Sometimes, he cries.
- He goes to practice everyday and listens to his coach.
- What do you say?

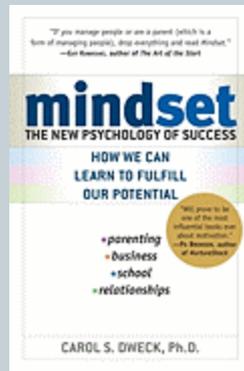
To Read More...

- **How Not to Talk to Your Kids-**
<http://nymag.com/news/features/27840/>
- **The Right Way to Praise Your Kids-**
<http://www.webmd.com/parenting/guide/the-right-way-to-praise-your-kids>
- **The Praise a Child Should Never Hear-**
<http://blogs.wsj.com/informedreader/2007/02/13/the-praise-a-child-should-never-hear/>

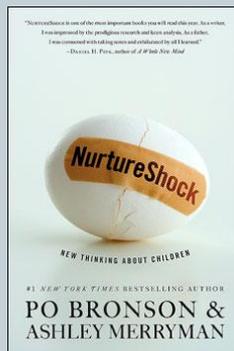
Three Great Books



Outliers: The Story of Success by
Malcolm Gladwell



Mindset the New Psychology of
Success: How we Can Learn to Fulfill
Our Potential by Carol Dweck



Nurture Shock: New Thinking About
Children by Po Bronson and Ashley
Merryman