Encouragement begins with attitude

There is little doubt that the most powerful confidence boosting skill that a parent has is the ability to encourage children.

Encouragement focuses on the process of what children do rather than on the results of their activity. Encouraging parents focus on their children's efforts, improvement and contributions they make.

But encouragement is more than just saying the right words. Encouragement begins with attitude - your attitude. You need to really believe that children are capable and that they can achieve whatever it is they wish to do.

It is easy to mouth the words of encouragement but without conviction and belief they are a waste of time. It is no use saying to a child that he or she is capable of solving their own problems but then take a forgotten lunch to school or pay a library fine for them. When we have a genuine attitude that children are resourceful all our actions reflect this belief. We begin to treat them as resourceful problem-solvers and help them develop the skills of independence rather than rescue them from difficulties and do things for them so they don’t get disappointed or frustrated by inability.

Encouragement is not a one-act play. It is not use you saying, “I tried that encouragement caper and it didn’t work. My child still lacks confidence.” Encouragement is a continual process that begins with attitude and shows itself through the language we use with children and the way we treat them.

It can be difficult to encourage children if you haven’t received much encouragement in your life. That is why it is important that parents, teachers and anyone else involved with kids have someone in their lives who encourages them. Encouragement has a snowball effect. When someone encourages you then you are more likely to encourage someone else.

Every child needs someone in his or her life who says, “I know you can do this.” For most children that person is a parent.

Quick Parenting Quiz

1. Which of the following parenting practices have been identified as contributing to perceptions of parental favouritism of one sibling over another?
   a) Comparing one child’s behaviour to another
   b) Attaching a nickname to a child after a talent e.g. professor
   c) Disciplining one child less than another
   d) Family meetings

2. The child most likely to bully siblings at home is a:
   a) First born girl
   b) First born boy
   c) Middle girl
   d) Middle boy

Answers: 1 a, b, c 2. b

Vitamins for parents

Are you too strict?

As a guide when children misbehave ensure that the consequences you use follow the 3 R’s:

1. Is the consequence Respectful of your child’s dignity (and doesn’t violate his need for physical and psychological safety)?
2. Is the consequence Reasonable? (Grounding a child for a month is a tad excessive!)
3. Is the consequence Related to the child’s misbehaviour so he learns there is a relationship between his behaviour and the consequence? (E.g. If they continually leave toys around means they lose those toys for a short-time)

Bright idea

Plant the seeds of self-esteem

You have the chance to plant seeds of optimism and self-esteem every day with children. It takes an awareness of opportunities and a willingness to be encouraging. For instance, if a child tells you that he is going to show some visitors around his school you can plant a seed of self-esteem by saying something like, “I think you will do a great job of that. You are really good with people.”

Plant an idea and it will soon become a reality.

Wise & Witty Words

“You ask me about my future and I tell you about my children.”
Susan Griffin

“The imagination of a child is healthy and the mature imagination of an adult is healthy, but there is a space of time between, when the soul is in ferment, the character undecided, the way of life uncertain, the ambition thick sighted.”
Keats