

Praises and Reproaches

Parents, in general, love their children and want the best for them. However, many parents frequently act out of fear and anxiety. To ensure their children's success, they resort to threats and negative remarks in hope of arousing their children's determination to achieve.

This attitude is especially true for first generation immigrants from many cultures. Parents from the rice paddy mentality are more extreme than other cultures. They are uprooted from their homeland and have to start all over in a new land. They have endured a long and harsh life and they want a better life for their children. We know their negative remarks might have fueled their children to become successful adults. Yet their demands and expectations might also be hurtful and harmful for the individual's lifelong well-being.

On the other end, there are parents who are over-the-head to instill self-esteem in their children. These parents might be so nurturing to the extent that they are afraid to discipline their children. This also is harmful for the children who could never be wrong. There's no boundaries and no end to their desires and wants. These children are not given a chance to grow.

Conscious parenting is a balance between praises and reproaches. Children should be praised for their efforts and accomplishments. And yet, they should also be reproached for their mistakes and undesirable behavior and attitude.

There is a time for praises and a time for reproaches.

Praises

The goal of praises is to arouse eagerness and enthusiasm for further learning and improvement. Praise the process, not the child. Praises enhance growth, self-esteem and trust. Diploma and certificate from the highest educational institution are pieces of paper. Performance, enjoyment and respect for a job or career are qualities that guarantee lifelong success. Everyone thrives with praise and appreciation.

- Praise when the child is making any effort to improve. (even baby steps)
- Praise when the child is showing independence.
- Praise when they show gratitude. (Toward people, things and events)
- Praise when they set priority for their needs and defer their wants (Needs are necessities for daily functions: Personal hygiene and comfort, nutrition, basic supplies for home and education, homework included.) (Wants are desires that can wait or set aside until needs are fulfilled.)
- Praise when they show care. (for other people, pets and our environment)

Parents should avoid over-the-head, or too much praise. Eddie Brummelman, (a psychologist at the University of Amsterdam) refers to these as "inflated" praises. Some children no longer know who they are but the person created by the parents. they might feel the pressure to continue performing exceptionally so they would not disappoint the parents. They might even

come to think of their ability as a fixed trait, not something that can be cultivated with practice. Others might become the center of the universe and they might grow up to become narcissists. And once they realize they were not the one of a kind special, they might fall apart. A child with a healthy self-esteem is one who has learned through experience. He/she is willing to face new challenges and persevere over obstacles and disappointment.

Reproaches

There is a time for praises and a time for reproaches. Every child is different. Conscious parenting means finding the right time and saying the right thing.

- Do not reproach on a bad day. Make sure you are not venting your upset emotion.
- Do not repeat yourself. (This is hard when you are upset)
- Start from ground zero. Try not to be presumptuous. (Avoid phrases like, "How many times I told you..." "I knew this is going to happen")
- Do not reproach while the child is angry or emotional. Wait until you and your child are calm.
- Deal with one issue at a time.
- Be aware of the child's pride. Avoid getting him/her into a defensive mold.
- Start from the child's perspective. Say, "This is not like you..." "I believe you can do better..."
- Reproach is not the same as a negative remark. Make sure what you say comes from your heart. Conscious parenting connects the head and the heart.
- Apologize at the end of the reproach.

Being an adult means being able to accept criticism, disagreement and disapproval. Being able to accept judgment and difference from superiors and co-workers are survival skills in job and career.

Start our children early to listen to praises as well as reproaches. Again, keep in mind that reproach is not the same as scolding, reprimanding and rebukes. There should be no attack on the child's personality. Do not generate a stormy emotional reaction such as hurt, fear, anger, humiliation and most of all, shame. This is a chance for parents to express their feelings, values and expectations. Help the child to understand the effect of his actions on himself and others without feeling attacked.