

4. Take Time for Encouragement

At a Glance...



Everyone needs encouragement from time to time, and this applies especially to children. Encouragement is more than praise. It takes practice to become a good encourager of children.

Time Required



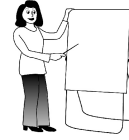
30 - 45 minutes, depending on number of participants

Core Concepts



Parents will use encouragement to build their children's esteem and confidence.

Objective



Participants will turn negative statements into encouraging statements.

Materials



- ☐ Chalk board or flip chart
- ☐ Chalk or markers
- ☐ "Encouraging/Discouraging Statements" (handout C-4-a)
- ☐ "Encouraging Words" (handout C-4-b)
- ☐ "Expressing Encouragement Worksheet" (handout C-4-c)
- ☐ "Expressing Encouragement Worksheet" (handout C-4-d key)
- ☐ Recommended Supplemental Handouts:
SP 488-C Principles of Parenting: Sending Messages of Love — available from your county UT Extension Office



Icebreaker

Give each participant a piece of paper and provide an assortment of markers. Ask participants to create a bumper sticker that highlights a talent or ability that their child possesses. Have them share their creations with the group. On the board or flip chart, list the talents shared. (Example: Proud Mom of a Champion Speller.)



Facilitator Script

What are some things that might cause children to feel inadequate or discouraged? (List responses on the board or flip chart)

These might include:

- ✓ Failing at a task.
- ✓ Not being able to do something that a friend can do.
- ✓ Not doing a job as well as they would like.
- ✓ Making a bad grade.
- ✓ Being compared to someone else.
- ✓ Being told “That’s good but...”
- ✓ Being told they are too young, too small, or incapable of doing something.
- ✓ Being ignored.

What are some ways you could **encourage your children?** (List responses on the flip chart or board.)

What are some examples of specific things you could say for each of the ways to encourage that you listed?

Some possible responses could include:

- ✓ **Recognize their abilities** (“You have excellent hand writing” or “You are good with animals.”)

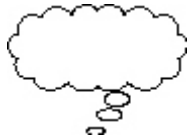
- ✓ **Acknowledge improvement** (“You brought that C up to a B” or “I can tell you really practiced on that song.”)
- ✓ **Focus on what was done well** rather than what was not done well (“See how well you painted this flower” or “You mad two As this six weeks.”)
- ✓ **Point out what they learn** from trying new things (even if they fail.)
- ✓ Encourage the child to **compare progress to his/her own abilities** rather than to compare him/herself to others (“Your score went from 58 to 71” or “You had more right answers this time.”)
- ✓ **Have realistic but positive expectations** (“Let’s make a goal to bring your Ds to Cs on the next report card.”)
- ✓ **Love your children as they are.** Don’t make love dependent on what they do or accomplish.

Cut apart the “Encouraging/Discouraging Statements “ (handout C-4-a) and mix them up. On the board or flip chart put the words “Encouraging Statements” at the top left side of the page and the words “Discouraging Statements” at the top right side of the page. Ask class members to put the statements they have under the appropriate heading. Read the lists to the class to see if there is agreement that the statements are sorted correctly. If there is only one class participant, allow him or her to sort the statements into two groups. Then you read the discouraging words and allow him or her to read the encouraging words.

Distribute and go over “Encouraging Words” (handout C-4-b.)

Encouragement is better when it is specific. Instead of saying “You’re such a good boy” say “I appreciate it when you take out the trash without being reminded,” or “You did a great job making your bed this morning—all of the covers look very smooth.”

Give out “Expressing Encouragement Worksheet” (handout C-4-c.) Read each discouraging statement aloud (or ask for a volunteer to read each statement) and have participants try to make the statements into encouraging statements. Use the first statement as an example. Go over responses. Use “Expressing Encouragement Worksheet” (handout C-4-d key) if participants need help.



Final Thoughts

Work Tip

Encouragement is wonderful to use in the work place and with friends and family. People enjoy being around someone who makes them feel good. Even supervisors or managers need encouragement from time to time. For example, if you comment that a change your supervisor made has helped things go a lot more smoothly, the supervisor will feel good and the work environment might improve. Co-workers can use encouragement, too. Noticing things that others do well makes them feel more positive about their work. Chances are if you practice encouraging others, they will encourage you as well.

Homework

Ask participants to write at least one encouraging statement for each of their children and ask them to share those encouraging words with their children tonight. Tell them you are expecting a report at the next class session.