



華人警訊服務中心 Chinese Community Policing Centre



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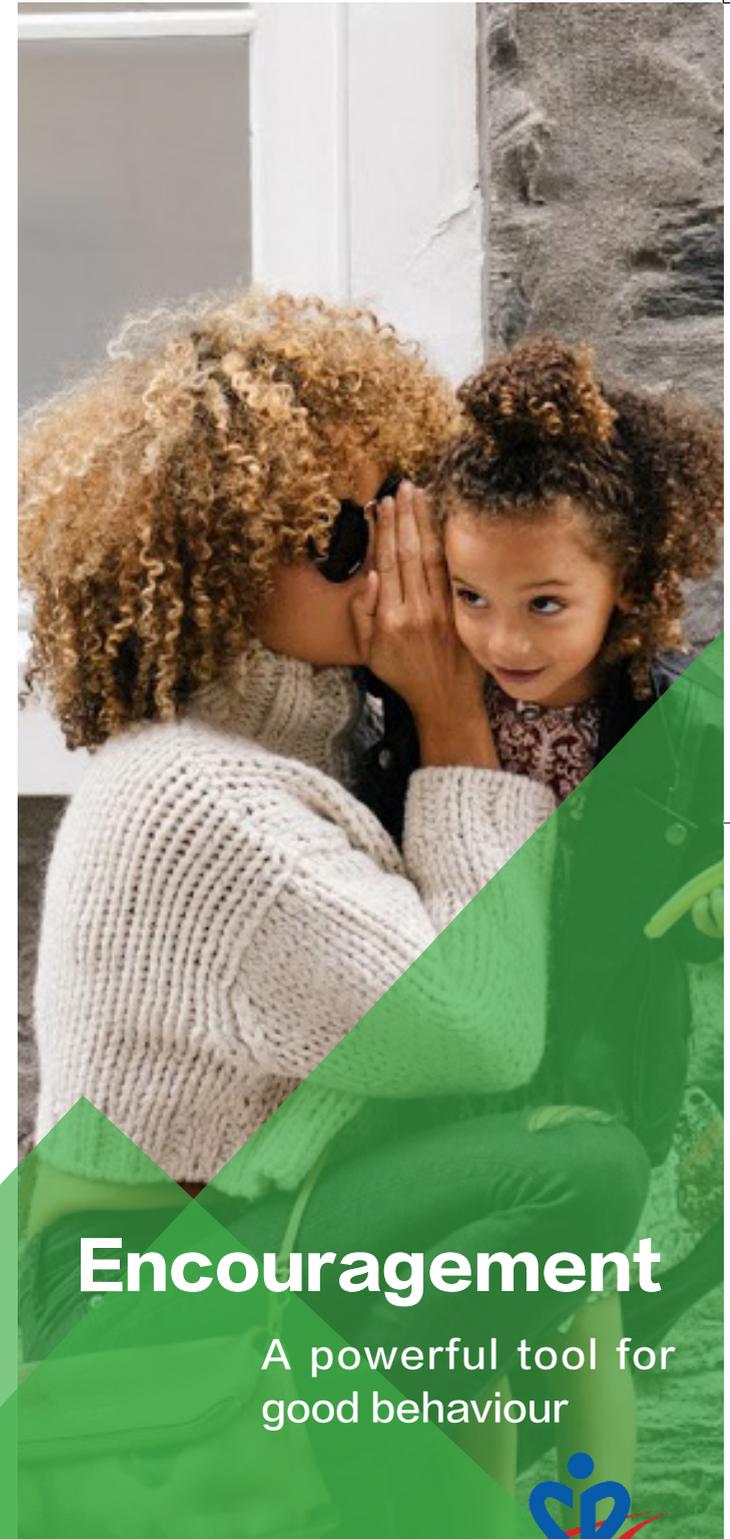
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What is Encouragement?

Encouragement can be defined as the action of providing someone with support, confidence, or hope to carry on with whatever tasks, deeds, or beliefs they are maintaining. It is a helpful form of persuasion to fuel the motivation to do or continue something. As such, it is clear to see the benefits of encouragement when applied to children for the purpose of developing favorable behaviours, habits, and beliefs.

Lack of encouragement - especially from parents - can lead to a multitude of issues for developing children. These may include (but are not limited to) lack of motivation to behave productively, avoidance of challenges, lower self-esteem, an external locus of evaluation (relying on others to appraise one's worth), stronger tendency towards conformity, and lower self-confidence.



Encouragement

A powerful tool for good behaviour



Encouragement Versus Praise

Encouragement focuses on the process, praise (and consequential rewards) focuses on the product.

Reward undermines motivation.

Alfred Adler – and many psychological researchers following him – argue that praise is not good for children, as it creates “approval junkies” rather than children with high self-esteem.

Current research suggests that praising children instead of encouraging them promotes higher risk-taking in the future.

On the other hand, current research suggests that children who receive more encouragement for their efforts tend to grow to actively choose to undertake more challenging tasks, when given the choice to do so.

Tips for Effective Encouragement

Be consistent:

Consistency is key when encouraging children (or anyone, really) to habitually perform favourable behaviours. E.g. if you find your child taking initiative and working on homework without being asked, let them know you appreciate their initiative.

	Praise	Encouragement
Definition	To express favourable judgement; to glorify, especially by attribution of perfection	To inspire with courage; to stimulate and support
Addresses	The doer – e.g. “good boy”	The deed – e.g. “Good job”
Recognizes	Only perfection – e.g. “You did it correctly”	Effort and improvement – e.g. “You gave your best”
Teaches	What to think, depending on the evaluation of others	How to think; self-evaluation and positive introspection
Effects on Self-worth	Feel important or valuable when others approve	Feel worthwhile when putting forth legitimate effort
Long-term Effect	Dependence on others	Self-reliance and confidence

Source: : B. G. Smith & J. Dixon

Be genuine with your encouragements:

Unauthentic and inaccurate encouragers can confuse and be counterproductive. E.g. Don’ t tell your adolescent they are doing a ‘great job’ studying if they’ re staring at social media on their phone or computer rather than their study material.

Be specific:

Make mention of your appreciation or admiration of the specific efforts, initiatives, displays of integrity, or good moral practices you are noticing your child developing. E.g. “I really appreciate your honesty.”

Avoid comparison to others:

The focus should be on growing – to be better than their past-selves. Comparing children to each-other is never apples-to-apples, and can be especially problematic if you make comparisons between siblings.

Do: “I’ ve noticed you have been keeping your room much more clean lately. Keep up the good work!”

Don’ t: “Wow, your room is almost as clean as your sister’ s!”