

Two-Minute Tips

This Week's Topic: Encouragement

Encouragement is an effective, strengthen-based way to guide young people's self-confidence and growth in a warm, positive way.¹ Encouragement focuses on a person's efforts rather than outcomes. When we acknowledge effort, we are focusing on progress and improvement rather than perfection.² Encouragement also teaches self-validation, which promotes perseverance and internal motivation to continue learning, even when tasks are hard.³ By giving encouraging feedback, we model a healthy framework for self-assessment and positive self-talk. These are both critical life skills. Teaching young people to make choices based on their own values and strengths, rather than the opinions of others, makes them more resistant to negative peer pressure, increases self-confidence, and promotes a healthy sense of agency.

Practice Tips

Here are a few quick tips on using encouragement in your program.

Ask Open-Ended Questions

Using open-ended questions helps create a dialogue between you and participants. It will help you understand their thinking and process.

Example: "You got an A on your math test this week, and last week you got a D. What did you do differently this week? Why do you think you got a different grade this time?"

Use Non-Evaluative Language

Be observant, specific, and refrain from making value statements that are based on your own opinion. Try phrases like, "You brought a game to share with everyone. That really shows our program value of generosity."

Affirm and Acknowledge Efforts

Make eye contact, nod, and focus on the participant sharing their thoughts and work with you. Show your appreciation for their effort.

Example: "Thank you for helping me clean up the snack table. Now I have more time to play a game with you."

Provide Specific, Supportive Feedback

Try pointing out details without evaluating them. This shows the participant that you're paying attention to their work.

Example: "Wow, your story has so many vivid details. I can really picture the setting in my mind when I read this."

Recap Your Feedback with Specific Details

Before you move on from your conversation, recap the encouragement and feedback you gave and restate any important, specific details.

Example: "Your poster has a lot of eye-catching color and the words are easy to read. This will help people know we're having a bake sale next week for our program."

Tips in Action!

[Watch](#) staff at Launch at Maple Elementary encourage a young person's efforts to create a plan for their lava lamp activity.

Want more two-minute tips?

Check out:

<https://depts.washington.edu/cqel/expand-ed-learning-opportunities/>

There you will find the latest tip, an archive of past tips, and a discussion board to connect with peers!

¹Extension.org. (2015, Sept. 8). *Encouragement is more effective than praise in guiding children's behavior*. Retrieved from

<https://articles.extension.org/pages/25701/encouragement-is-more-effective-than-praise-in-guiding-childrens-behavior>

²Hoefle, V. (2015, May 14). *The difference between praise and encouragement*. PBS Parents/PBS.org. Retrieved from <http://www.pbs.org/parents/expert-tips-advice/2015/05/difference-praise-encouragement-matters/>

³Positive discipline:Creating respectful relationships in home and schools. (n.d.) *Encouragement versus praise for teachers*. Retrieved from <https://www.positivediscipline.com/articles/encouragement-vs-praise-teachers>