

To Praise or Not to Praise

Tania Bullick

Recently I have been talking with teaching teams who have been grappling with the ideas around rewards and praise and what that means to and for children. Giving children stickers, stamps and sometimes food for tasks such as tidying up, for showing kindness to a friend or for having their nappy changed can be accepted practice by well intentioned teachers. Verbally rewarding children with praise such as 'Good job', 'Beautiful painting', and 'I am proud of you' can also be common practice. It is understandable that people might feel this is beneficial to children as society has encouraged reward and praise since the self-esteem movement began back in the 1960s, and some programmes continue to advocate tangible rewards and abundant praise.



Scratch the surface however and the research is clear. Rewards and praise (the verbal version of a gold star) just like threats, punishment and bribes, work to get children to do what we want them to do, to comply, in the short term, but do nothing to encourage *"our children to become ethical, compassionate, creative, competent individuals, who have a strong sense of self, know how to think and not just what to think, who are naturally curious about themselves and the world around them, who don't 'do to please' and are not easily led, who are willing to act with integrity"* (Coloroso, 2002).



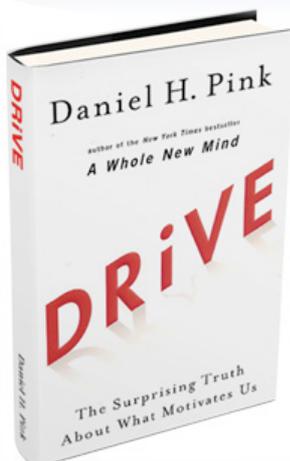
Carol Dweck's research and work on mindsets has shown that the words we choose to use will effect the child's mindset. The research found praising a child for how smart they were resulted in children giving up, unable to take a risk on more difficult tasks for fear of not being seen to be smart should they fail or make a mistake. They were also prepared to lie and cheat to cover up their perceived failures. However when children were praised for the effort they put into a task, they were willing to take risks, acknowledge and overcome mistakes and persevere with effort in the face of obstacles. This growth mindset enabled children to see learning as something that happens over time and involved challenge.

Newsletter 01/2014

In a short video clip that Lorraine Sands took of her friend Hunter challenging himself on a rope swing, we can hear her, in the background, say *"Do you know I've been watching how much you've been practicing and look what you can do now. You put a lots of effort into that. Well done."* Lorraine says this with such kind enthusiasm and celebration and Hunter now has the tools and strategies, of practice and effort, to apply to his future endeavors knowing he is up to the challenge. Contrast this with a child praised for their *'beautiful painting'* who then proceeds to do that painting over and over again, who research suggests may not take the risk of trying new medium in different ways to grow and progress their art.



Barbara Coloroso in her book *Kids Are Worth It!* suggests parents and teachers use encouragement and feedback in the form of compliments, comments and constructive criticism to replace rewards and praise. She also suggests we suspend our own judgement and simply say "Tell me about it" and listen to understand the child's perspective - it might be different to your own. Teachers I work with agree that this takes awareness, effort and practice - a growth mindset!



Tangible rewards offered to children to perform a task other than very simple ones, backfire and do not create the intrinsic motivation we desire for children. Daniel Pink who has written the book 'Drive', says of intrinsic motivation, *"We do things because they're interesting, we do it because they're fun, we get better at it and because they make a contribution."* Barbara Coloroso writes that rewards rob children of this kind of creativity, autonomy, sense of well-being and connectedness. She says children will do good because it feels good but when the sticker is introduced, doing good is no longer its own reward, it is the means to get the sticker. They have an addictive quality and the more children need or want rewards the greater the effect. Children become reward and praise dependent, the effects of which can have serious ramifications throughout their lives. In the Youtube clip 'To Praise or Not To Praise' Barbara says *"Reward and praise dependent children don't have that inner sense of 'I'm an ok person and I'm connected to other human beings and we both matter'. Praise and reward dependent kids think 'it's all about me'."*

Alfie Kohn suggest that, as teachers, we need to ask ourselves what it is we want, long term, for the children we teach. Just as Alfie Kohn does with thousands of teachers, I have started to discuss this with teachers I am working with and unsurprisingly they say they would want children to be things like kind, empathetic, caring, curious, life-long learners, creative, happy and responsible. There is never any mention of compliance - these teachers do not see compliance as a valuable disposition for these children's future. Once we have a strong sense of what it is we do want for children, and what is valued learning in our place, we can go about cultivating an environment which supports those things - this may take some time and research. The books and web based resources below are a fabulous place to start.

Kidz
are
worth it!



Giving
Your Child
the Gift of
Inner Discipline
COMPLETE UNABRIDGED AUDIO
read by the author

Barbara Coloroso

References

Coloroso, B. (2002) *Kids are worth it!*. HarperResource:New York

Dweck, C. (2006) *Mindset. The new psychology of success*. Ballantine Books:New York

Kohn, A. (2006) *Beyond discipline. From compliance to community*. ASCD:Virginia, USA

Youtube:

- [To Praise or not to praise](#)
- [Daniel Pink. What really motivates workers](#)
- [TED Daniel Pink. The puzzle of motivation](#)

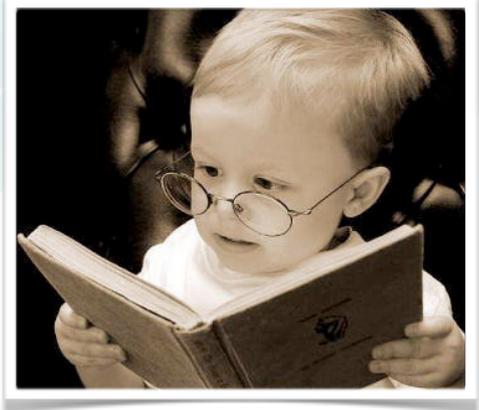
Websites:

- www.alfiekohn.com
- www.kidsareworthit.com
- www.mindsetonline.com

Gill Creates an 'Urge to Read'

Lynn Rupe

I had a pleasure of sitting down on the couch, computer in one hand with a cup of coffee in the other and a wonderful article to read. What a relaxing way to spend an afternoon. My 14 year old son asked what I was doing. When I said that I was reading an article that Gill had written he asked if it was boring to sit and read. Not meaning to disrespect Gill but rather questioning the notion of sitting and reading as entertaining and enjoyable even though it did not take copious amounts of energy, well not physical anyway. "Not at all" was my reply, although I don't really think he even heard as he raced out the door off to meet with friends at the beach. 'To each his own' as my mother would have said. For Jordan life is fast moving full of energetic sporting pursuits. I wonder, is this an urge that drives him or a deep passion to excel in what he loves, or are the two - urges and passion - one and the same? Well back to reading Gill's article so my questions could well be answered.



Having read and pondered over Gill's article I would describe it as thought-provoking, professionally challenging, and enlightening but never boring. This is a must read for teachers thinking about responding to children in their settings. We often talk about noticing, recognising and responding at workshops and in articles. Gill's article talks about planning using teacher's knowledge of 'urges' or schemas.

Throughout the article it is apparent there is a strong emphasis on partnership and relationship. A partnership between teachers and teachers as Gill talks about planning in collaboration and therefore responding to a particular urge/schema or passion as a team. Also the partnership between children and teachers as teachers move at a pace that allows them to really listen to children's play and conversations.

Now I know that you are all chomping at the bit to stop reading the newsletter and head off to the resource page on the ELP website to read Gill's article for yourself. Well you may have to taihoa a little as I was fortunate to get a sneak preview prior to publishing. Rest assured though the article will be there very shortly so watch out for it on the website. I think that Amy will announce the posting of the article on Facebook for those that check in regularly.

Happy reading everyone.
Lynn

Introducing... Marianne MacPherson

Lynn Rupe



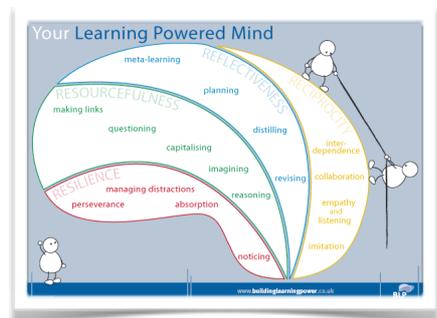
I would like to introduce Marianne as the newest member of the ELP facilitator team. It seems a little overdue really as when I ask Marianne about when she started with ELP there is actually a very long association. Marianne started her journey with ELP in 2005 when she was at Glen Innes Kindergarten and then a year later when she moved to Pigeon Mountain Kindergarten (PMK) where the journey continued as a centre facilitator. Towards the end of last year Marianne came on board the ELP team bringing with her a wealth of knowledge and experience.

Marianne trained 30 years ago at Hamilton Teachers College. Talking with Marianne she acknowledges that this formal training was just the beginning of her learning, as over time with fabulous mentors and teaching teams throughout her teaching career her teaching practice has become enriched for which she is very grateful.

When I asked Marianne where her passions and energies lie in ECE she spoke very passionately about Guy Claxton's work on Building Learning Power. While at PMK Marianne and the teaching team enthusiastically researched the notion of how the conversations and language we use impact on the children's view of themselves as learners. Also built into this research was the desire to build on their understanding of what valued learning looks like.

It is apparent from conversations with Marianne that she has a strong interest and commitment to developing bicultural teaching practices for herself and those that she is working alongside. Central to this commitment is the importance that she places on whanaungatanga, the heart of relationships. Believing that through partnership with teachers, children and whānau children's mana and sense of tino rangatiratanga will continue to be nurtured.

One way that children and adults are linked with our families, their values, and their past are our names, therefore our names are often tied to how we view ourselves and our sense of belonging. I asked, "Why Marianne?". Marianne said, "I am not sure what my name means. But my first name, Marianne, came from when my father was at university student in Dunedin. Living next to a Dutch family they became good friends and I was named from one of their children - Marianne. This may have been because they liked the name. My middle name comes from my Aunty - my fathers only sister".





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Newsletter 01/2014

When I looked up Marianne I found this about the name which I think describes her very well: You find the beauties of nature, fine music, art, and literature - all the deeper things of life - inspiring.



Welcome to the ELP whānau Marianne!

Recent Events - Dunedin

Carol Marks





Dunedin Big Day Out and Learning Story Day

Puraho māku, kei ngaure o mahi. To catch fish you must place your basket in the water. (No work, no reward)

This weekend was attended by enthusiastic teachers keen to refresh their understanding of assessment and pedagogy. This was held at the historic and lovely building that is Otago Boys' High School. We enjoyed working with you all.

- Wendy, Tania, Kathryn and Carol



Upcoming Events - Auckland

Join us in Auckland on 22 and 23 March as we host the Big Day Out with ELP and Learning Stories day. See our website for more information www.elp.co.nz



*invites you to a day of
maximum challenge
with a series of workshops
providing a feast of inspiration...*

BIG DAY OUT with ELP

Saturday, 22 March 2014
Epsom Girls' Grammar,
Silver Road, Epsom,
Auckland 1023.

COST: \$95.00 inc GST. Morning tea provided.

BOOKING: Limited places are available. Please register by 17 March 2014. Workshops to be chosen on the day of enrolment. Morning sessions will be repeated in the afternoon.

TO REGISTER: Email with your name and Centre to Amy Barker: admin@elp.co.nz
For further information, please refer to the Educational Leadership Project website:

www.elp.co.nz



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LEARNING STORIES with ELP

Sunday, 23 March 2014
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COST: \$95.00 inc GST. Morning tea provided.

BOOKING: Limited places are available. Please register by 17 March 2014. Workshops to be chosen on the day of enrolment. Morning sessions will be repeated in the afternoon.

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