

# ORCA

*The Art of Encouragement*



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# How We Can Encourage Children

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By Edith A. Dewey (Alyson's Grandmother)

Encouragement is the most important aspect of child-raising. Dr. Rudolph Dreikurs claims that "a child needs encouragement as a plant needs sun and water". The essence of encouragement is to increase the child's confidence in him/herself and to convey to him / her that s/he is good enough as s/he is and not just as s/he might be.

It is all too common to find that our homes, classrooms and communities provide a series of discouraging experiences to many children and that all too often encouragement is only given to those who need it the least. We suggest that parents, teachers and all those who deal with children keep in mind the following suggestions: (these apply in all human relationships)

- 1. Avoid Discouragement:** The feelings of inferiority which all humans experience must be overcome if we are to function optimally.
- 2. Work for improvement, not perfection:** This goes for adults too!
- 3. Commend effort:** One's efforts is more significant than one's results
- 4. Separate the deed from the doer:** One may reject the child's actions without rejecting the child.
- 5. Build on Strengths, not on weaknesses:** A misbehaving child has the power to defeat the adult. Give him/her credit for this.
- 6. Show your trust in the child:** This must be sincere, so one must first learn to trust the child.
- 7. Mistakes should not be viewed as failures:** We need to take away the stigma of failure. Failure usually indicates a lack of skill. One's worth is not dependent on success.
- 8. Failure and defeat with only stimulate special effort when there remains the hope of eventual success:** They do not simulate a deeply discouraged child who has lost all hope of succeeding.
- 9. Stimulate and lead the child, but do not try to push him/her ahead:** Let the child move at her/his own speed.
- 10. Remember, genuine happiness comes from self – sufficiency:** Children need to learn to take care of themselves.

- 11. Integrate the child into the group rather than treating them as “something special”:** Treating the child as “something special” increases their over-ambition. An over-ambitious child who cannot succeed will usually switch to the useless side of life with the “private logic” “If I can’t be the best, I’ll at least be the worst” Even more seriously, he / she may give up all together.
- 12. Stimulating competition usually does not encourage children:** Those who see hope of winning may put forth an extra effort, but the stress is on winning rather than on contribution and co-operation. The less competitive one is, the better one is able to stand competition.
- 13. Remember that praise is not the same as encouragement:** Praise may have an encouraging effect on some children, but praise often discourages and causes anxiety and fear. Some come to depend on praise and will perform only for recognition in ever-increasing amounts. Success accompanied by special praise for results may make the child fear “I can never do it again”.
- 14. Help the child develop the courage to be imperfect:** We all need to learn to take mistakes in stride and learn from them.
- 15. Success is a by-product:** Preoccupation with the obligation to succeed is intimidating. The resulting fear and anxiety often contributes to failure. If one functions with the emphasis on what contribution s/he makes or how s/he may co-operate with others, success is usually the result.
- 16. Don’t give responsibility and significance only to those who are already responsible:** Give opportunities to be responsible to a child who is discouraged may make it worth while for him to co-operate.
- 17. Solicit the help of the other members of the family or members of the group to help a discouraged child find his or her place in useful ways**
- 18. Remember that discouragement is contagious and that a discouraged child tends to discourage those who work with them**
- 19. Avoid trying to mend one’s own threatened ego by discouraging others or by looking down on them**
- 20. Overcome your pessimism and develop an optimistic approach to life**  
Optimism is contagious and helps encourage yourself and other

References:

“Encouraging children to learn: The encouragement process” By Don Dinkmeyer and Dr Rudolph Dreikurs (Prentice Hall Inc)  
 “Psychology in the Classroom” (A Manual for Teachers) by Rudolph Dreikurs (Harper and Rom 1957, 1963)  
 “Children: The Challenge” By Rudolph Dreikurs and Vicki Sultz (Duell, Sloan & Pearce)

# The Enjoyable Art of Encouragement

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The Enjoyable Art of Encouragement – Some Sample Examples

By Parent Encouragement Program

**1. Not Attributes... be specific**

- “Something you do that I admire....”
- “Would you like to know something about you that I think is unique / pretty special / neat / unusual?”

**2. Identify accomplishments... be specific**

- “I think I see real progress in....”
- “I’m impressed by the speed / thoroughness / courage you demonstrated when you....”
- “I’ve noticed that you seem to have a special ability ....”

**3. Point out the usefulness of their idea**

- “I’m glad you suggested that possibility.”
- “Your idea was a really helpful one – how did you ever think to do that”
- “Your creative solution did the trick! – thanks”

**4. Express your pleasure and lead them further**

- “I am / was so delighted with the way you...”
- “That idea seemed to work so well for you. Would you mind if I tried it too?”
- “Wow! I wonder what might happen if you also...”
- “I’m interested in how you handled that problem. Would you explain your strategy to me?”

**5. Point out the commonality**

- “I am no exception.”
- “It’s not surprised that...”
- “People often find it hard to...”
- “I think I may have felt similarly the other day when...”
- “Lots of four year old boys have scary dreams”

**6. Ask for feedback**

- “What are your thoughts on the subject?”
- “How does this suggestion strike you?”
- “Do you have some different ideas?”
- “If you try any of the ideas we discussed, I’d be interested in hearing how they work out for you.”

**7. Help them deal with mistakes and fear of failure**

- “It’s true it didn’t go as you had hoped, but what did you learn from your experience?”
- “Would you like to give it a try together?”
- “That must seem scary / difficult / formidable, but I think you can give it a run for its money.”

**8. Show interest in the concerns they express**

- “I can understand that you might be hurt / irate / ....”
- “Would you like to talk it over?”
- “I was aware of your strong feelings about...”

**9. Ask for Help**

- “Help! – I’ve really gotten my self into a pickle”
- “Would you be willing to give me a hand with ...?”
- “You could sure help me / us / the others by...”
- “Since your skilled at...., I was hoping you’d....”

**10. Distinguish between the child and his / her behaviour**

- “I love you but I do not like the kicking rudeness etc... This is not how we treat other people.”
- “You may stay inside if you like, but the noise belongs outside”

**11. Point out what should be encouraging to them**

- “You have a right to feel good about / be proud of...”
- “I imagine you were pleased by your progress in...”

**12. Express your appreciation**

- “I was grateful for / I surely appreciated ...”
- “Your help with...” – your quick thinking...” – your co-operation ...” – your hard work...” – your suggestion...” – your creativity ...” - your delightful sense of humour...” –your friendliness...”

**13. Express your confidence in them and their ability to handle the situation**

- “You would like us to believe you can’t do it – but we think you can”
- “I’m confident you can straighten this out, but if you need any help from me you know where to find me.”
- “I can understand how you might feel, but I am convinced you can handle it.”

**14. Keep them in control of themselves and their problem**

- “That is a tough problem, but I am convinced you’ll figure out a way.”
- “Could you use a helping hand?”
- “Would you be interested in learning a few good tricks?”
- “Would a kiss help?”
- “Do you have any idea how you might handle that?”

# The Special Language of Encouragement

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## Phrases that demonstrate acceptance:

- "I like the way you handled that."
- "I like the way you tackle a problem."
- "I'm glad you enjoy learning."
- "I am glad you are pleased with it. "
- "Since you are not satisfied what do you think you can do so that you will be pleased with it?"
- "It looks as if you enjoyed that."
- "How do you feel about it?"

## Phrases that show confidence:

- "Knowing you, I'm sure you'll do fine."
- "You'll make it."
- "I have confidence in your judgment."
- "That's a rough one, but I am sure you'll work it out."
- "You'll figure it out."

## Phrases that focus on contributions, assets, and appreciation:

- "Thanks; that helped a lot."
- "It was thoughtful of you to."
- "Thanks, I really appreciate \_\_\_\_\_, because it makes my job easier."
- "I need your help on."
- To a family group: "I really enjoyed today. Thanks."
- "You have skill in \_\_\_\_\_.Would you do that for the family."

## Phrases that recognize improvement:

- "It looks as if you really worked hard on that."
- "It looks as if you spent a lot of time thinking that through."
- "I see that you're moving along."
- "Look at the progress you've made." (be specific, tell how)
- "You're improving in" (be specific)
- "You may not feel that you've reached your goal, but look at how far you've come!"

# Praise Versus Encouragement

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Praise		Encouragement	
Underlying Characteristics	Message Sent	Underlying Characteristics	Message Sent
Focus is on external control.	Your worth depends on my praise.	Focus on internal ability for self-control.	I trust you to be responsible.
Focus on external Evaluation.	To be worthwhile you must please me.	Focus on internal evaluation.	How you feel about yourself and your own effort is important.
Reward given only for well-done completed tasks.	To be worthwhile you must meet my standards.	Recognition of effort and improvement.	You don't have to be perfect. Effort and improvement are important.
Focus on personal status and image.	You've got to be the best (or at least better than others) to be worthwhile.	Focus on assets and contribution.	Your contributions count. We appreciate what you've done.