

# Communicating effectively with our children

A four week online course

Week 3

# Agenda Week 3

- Review from last week
- Questions and concerns
- Learning to talk differently
  - General points
  - Junk praise versus effective praise
  - Expressing concerns
  - Keeping the lines of communication open as they grow

# Review

- Learning to listen, contd.
  - Recognizing ineffective listening
  - Learning to listen to understand rather than to reply
- Building rapport
  - Setting the environment
  - The art of validation and paraphrasing
  - The importance of empathy – listening from the other's point of view
  - How not to say it
  - Barriers to empathy
  - Practicing empathy

Now for the talking . . .



*Khayr ul qalaam, qalla wa  
dalla*

*The Best Speech is Short and  
Effective*

# Tips for Effective Speaking

- Know what you want before you speak.
- Keep statements brief. Don't go on and on (flooding)
- Stick to one subject at a time.
- Stop to consider whether the child has understood.
- Use I statements –take responsibility for your thoughts and feelings
- Take opportunities for positive communication as well as express concerns
- Don't hide your feelings but express them in a responsible way.

# Learning the skills of talking

## 1. Using praise effectively

Junk praise  
versus  
effective praise



# What is junk praise?

- Evaluative – great, wonderful, beautiful
- Constant and over the top for minimal effort or mediocre results
- Provides no information or description of what the child did right

# The problem with “junk praise”

- Junk praise can be addictive
- Junk praise confuses children about the realistic assessment of their actions.
- Over-praised children lose confidence in their ability to assess themselves.
- It hinders the internal motivation of the child – they will perform for the praise rather than for the inherent value of an activity

# The problem with “junk praise”

- It may actually lessen a child’s self esteem rather than increase it – they hunger for admiration and approval
- Over praised children may feel superior to their peers and have an inflated sense of their abilities
- Over praised children may become increasingly self absorbed, which hinders them from making a positive contribution to the world
- Over praised children may suffer from perfectionism – trying to live up to the image they believe their parents have of them

# Descriptive praise

- Descriptive praise does not evaluate what a child has done, but rather, describes it in terms so that the child is likely to recognize the truth and credit and praise herself.
- Descriptive praise notices, mentions, and emphasizes steps in the right direction, improvements in behaviour, work habits and attitude, social skills, and any absence of undesirable or negative behaviour.

# How to praise descriptively

- 1. Describe what you see and hear
- 2. Describe what you feel.

# Practice with descriptive praise

- **Junk praise:** "That's the most incredible painting I've ever seen!"
- **Problem:** First of all, it's a lie. It can't possibly be the most incredible picture, and describing it as such sets up a standard for achievement that puts great pressure on a child. ("If Mom thinks this painting is the 'most incredible,' what can I do in art class to wow her next week?")
- **Descriptive praise:** "I really like the way you used dark red and blue to make the sky. I can almost feel the rain coming down!" This is an observation, not a judgment. It acknowledges a child's effort, not his product.

# Practice with descriptive praise

- Praise: "All A's! I'm so proud of you!"
- Problem: If you're proud of a child's A's, what will you be proud of when she brings home (God forbid) a C-plus? This type of praise tells a child that what she's done matters more than who she is or how she made the grade.
- Rephrase: "I know how hard you worked to get that A in math. Looking back, how do you think you did it?" This simple rephrasing shifts the focus from outcome (good grades) to effort (hard work in math.)

# Practice with descriptive praise

- Praise: "You built that house of blocks all by yourself? You're a genius!"
- Problem: This type of praise shows no appreciation for what the child created. It's a hollow, certainly inaccurate comment (chances are, your child is not a genius!) that ignores what the child wants to show you - what he built.
- Rephrase: "Look how tall you made the house, and it's still standing! That's not easy to do; how did you get it to stay up?"



# Practice with descriptive praise

- **Praise:** "I'm so proud of you for sharing your bunny."
- **Problem:** The focus is on you, the parent, with a comment like this. In other words, "You have pleased **me**, and that's what really matters." You want children to share because it makes them feel good, not because it makes you feel good. The child also needs to understand why you found the behaviour worthwhile, or at least pay attention to what was involved in that moment of sharing between two children.
- **Rephrase:** "I saw that when you shared the bunny with Adil it made you so happy, because you made him happy by giving him a turn. Sharing feels great, doesn't it?"

# Practice with descriptive praise

- **Praise:** "You were the best behaved girl at the party – you are Mummy's good girl."
- **Problem:**
- **Rephrase:**

# Speaking effectively when expressing concerns or during conflict



How do we normally speak (during conflict)?



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-

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- Character assassination – you are so lazy
- Catastrophic interpretation – you will never get anywhere in life because of your laziness
- Blaming – because of your laziness I have so much to do
- Lecturing – you should stop being so lazy . . .
- Screaming



# A better way to raise concerns is to

- Show respect
- Separate the behavior from the child
- Be specific
- Avoid blame

# The XYZ Statement

- When you do X (specific behavior, implies change is possible)
- In situation Y (specific setting, not everything is a problem)
- I feel Z (specific feeling, owning your reaction, control expression of feelings)
- I would appreciate it if you did ( . . . ) instead

# Practice with the XYZ Statement

- When you do X (leave your coat on the floor)
- In situation Y (when you come home from school)
- I feel Z (frustrated, disrespected)
- I would appreciate it if you did ( hung up your coat on the hook) instead

# Keeping the lines of communication open as they grow



Many parents report that their children stop confiding in them and talking to them as they grow older and especially as they reach adolescence

There are some things that you can do  
and some things that you should avoid  
in order to keep the lines of  
communication open as your children  
grow older

# Avoid door slammers

- You don't really mean that
- You should not feel that way
- That is a silly way to think
- Why are you asking me that
- You are too young to know
- Act your age
- You will be fine
- Don't be a baby

# Door openers (magic words to learn by heart!)

- What do you think
- Would you like to share more about that
- That is a good question
- **Hmmm, how about that**
- That sounds important to you
- Do you want to talk about it?
- That is an interesting way to look at it
- I would like to hear your point of view on this
- Tell me more
- **Help me understand**
- Sounds like you are feeling . . . Is that right?
- High/low



# Discussion

- Do you have any concerns with trying the “Door Openers”?

# What are your concerns in trying the door openers?

- What if I don't agree with their point of view?
- Is talking about something encouraging them to try something illegal, immoral or haram?
- It appears too contrived
- What if I don't know the answer to what they are asking
- It makes me uncomfortable
- What if I am also confused about something?

How would you handle this question?  
What would go through your mind?  
What would you say?

- Mom, I wonder what red wine tastes like?

# Concerns with door openers

- Listening to children and asking questions actually has the effect of:
  - Clarifying their confusions about values
  - Helping to build moral intelligence in children
  - Helping to build a strong relationship of trust with the parent
  - **STOPPING** them from engaging in risky behaviour

How you handle difficult questions like these will greatly determine the quality of your communication in the future

# Questions and comments?

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