

## **Your Village: Parenting Beyond Discipline**

### **#109: Instilling Confidence in Kids Transcript**

**Erin:** Hello and welcome to the Your Village podcast, Parenting Beyond Discipline, the place to learn about ALL things parenting and get your questions answered. I'm your host, Erin Royer.

Today I'm talking about instilling confidence in kids. I got a question from a mom about this subject, as it relates to praise. So I'll be covering this piece of self-esteem. Also, I just happened to get a great email from my son's head swim coach yesterday that really touched me. It's related to confidence and building confidence or really about how not to destroy confidence as it relates to sports. But while it's about sports, it could relate to any area of life where kids are expected to perform at a certain level and how we handle it when they fall short of our expectations. So it's a great piece and I'm going to read that along with adding my own thoughts and commentary about why I liked it, why it touched me and how it pertains to not just sports but many other areas.

The first question about working on instilling confidence comes from Stephanie, who wrote, "Hi Erin, I began listening to your podcast from the begging a few weeks ago and I have learned so much! I listen to at least one episode a day and can relate to a lot of your discussions so THANK YOU! You make me feel prepared and ready for the future. I have two separate questions for you.

With regards to building self confidence in childcare and not over praising. How do you recommend you transition to drawing back on this without giving a 'cold' response. My step daughter will clean her room and then come to us asking if we are proud and seeking praise. I will now reply "Well do you feel proud of the job you did?" but I find she is still looking for something and then feels disappointed when I don't over praise for something she is responsible for doing anyway."

I love how Stephanie says, that she doesn't want to over praise for something she is responsible for doing anyway. This is SO true! At 4 if a child cleans up their entire room on their own accord and does a fantastic job, gush away! Right? "wow! You cleaned your whole room by yourself! You are so organized!" But in Stephanie's case, her stepdaughter is 9. We still can expect to remind at 9. Most kids won't clean their rooms on their own at that age but when we do remind we expect they will, for the most part go clean the room without pushback and do a decent job, not perfect, but decent. So it is important to give positive feedback for all the positives that you see, cleaning it right away without pushing back, if she cleans it without being reminded, if she does an

exceptional job of cleaning it, all the books put away, no clothes on the floor and trash all picked up. If you rate it a 9 or 10 out of 10. Then definitely some positive feedback is in order for any or all of these pieces. "Thank you for cleaning your room without me needing to even ask. That was very responsible." or "Thank you for cleaning your room right away the first time I asked, that was very helpful." "Your room looks very clean without any reminders about what needs done. That is being very helpful. Thank you." So here's the tricky part. First I want to remind everyone, or for anyone who hasn't heard me say this before, research shows that on average, a girl's self esteem peaks at age 9. NINE. That's not good and it's not OK. There are a lot of factors and reasons for this. But it's just really good to keep in mind as a parent and know that these next several years are key in helping our daughters keep and continue to develop solid, internal self-esteem and self-worth. What happens with praising, is that it's external. It's doing for the other, for approval, rather than out of sense of internal motivation, for the self. So in this case, Stephanie's step-daughter is looking to her for her approval. So how do we help our daughters build an internal sense of self worth? How do we support them when they are looking for approval without falling into that setup of approval seeking, especially in cases like Stephanie is sharing, where cleaning your room and doing a nice job is expected? First, using the types of interactions I just shared, positively reinforcing the behaviors she did well, doing it right away, doing it without being asked, doing a nice thorough job. But doing it without a saying, "Great job! or I'm SO proud of you! That's so amazing! You're the best!" It is OK to praise with a great job or I'm so proud of you when it is really something above and beyond. We save it for those times because first of all it's true in those instances but also because otherwise it also loses its meaning after a while. "You ate all your vegetables! I'm so proud!" "You got all your homework questions complete! I'm so proud!" "You got yourself dressed! Great job!" Right? Soon it's like, "Alright already!" IT's too much! By the way, I love your response of "Do you feel proud?" That is the perfect response. But then you can work on her struggle for searching for more, in other ways, which I'll cover now.

So I would say in this type of instance where she still seems to be looking for something, think about and answer this on your own and then also have a talk with her. What is she missing that she's looking for? How is her self-esteem overall? Remember that self esteem comes from 2 places, a feeling of belonging, of being needed and a feeling of accomplishment. She could be missing both of these or maybe it's just one. But think about it and see where and how you can help her achieve those two feelings. Does she want to feel needed, loved and welcomed in your home, especially with another sibling in the house now? (Stephanie also shared that she and her husband have an 18 month old together, so her step-daughter's half sibling) It sounds like she feels needed and wanted and part of the family. But with step families that can take

some extra reassurance so just think about that a little bit and see if that's something she might be looking for that feeling of belonging and feeling needed and wanted. Or is it a sense of accomplishment that she is looking for some approval? How does she do in school and how does she feel about her academic performance? Does she have any activities or hobbies that she enjoys and has mastered to any degree? This sense of accomplishment piece is extremely important for self-worth. If she doesn't talk with your husband and then her about something she's interested in taking on and hopefully that is a possibility with the two separate households.

Then, have a coaching session with her. Let her know the reasons you love and appreciate her and the times or reasons you are proud of her, the things she does extremely well or goes above and beyond. But let her know that cleaning her room is something expected and while it does make you happy when she does it well without being asked or right away after being asked once, that it's just not something deserving of high praise. This way you are setting an expectation for her but also supporting her need in that moment to feel appreciated.

I've seen these memes go around that say something like a parent's job is to fill a child's bucket so full (meaning self-esteem) that no one can poke holes big enough to drain it.) But I don't agree. A parent's job is provide opportunity for a child to learn how to fill their own bucket. It needs to eventually be a self-filling bucket. So that's what we are working on throughout these early years, giving kids opportunities to feel needed/wanted and accomplished so that as they get into adolescence and definitely by adulthood can fill their own buckets and also know when someone they spend time with is poking holes in their bucket or supporting them in their accomplishments and goals.

I do have two classes on self-esteem on the website, one for parents of kids 0-5 and one for parents of kids 5 and over at [yourvillageonline.com](http://yourvillageonline.com) under the health and development section. It covers all the ways to support your child in building a solid foundation of self-esteem. I cover how to encourage, rather than praise with lots of examples and all the ways to help children feel needed and wanted, and encourage helpfulness and being a contributing family member as well lots of ways to provide opportunities for accomplishment that also is such an important piece to self-esteem and of course some common traps parents fall into where they think they are helping self esteem but are actually undermining it.

Next I'm going to share the email my son's head swim coach sent out this week along with my commentary on why it touched me so deeply and how relates to all areas of a

child's life in terms of accomplishment, right after a word from our brand new sponsor, Eli and Ali baby and their very innovative product the tush swiper!

Now that we are back after a word from our sponsor Eli and Ali baby, I'm going to share this very heartfelt message from my son's swim coach who's name is Chris. Let me tell you about Chris. Chris is a big teddy bear of a guy. He mostly works with the very elite swimmers on our team, most are teens 15-16 plus who perform at a very high level. This man has so much heart and he loves each and every one of these kids. He pushes the kids hard but he's a gentle giant and you know he loves the kids and the sport. When I emailed him that Carter wanted to come back and asked if he remembered us, he totally did and was so elated and grateful that Carter was coming back, even though he'd never worked with him directly.

So Chris was actually sharing an article that he found but first describes his experience as a young swimmer. Chris shared that kids are leaving youth sports at alarming rates and attributes much of it to the parent interaction and pressure more-so than from athlete burnout.

He shared about his experience with his own parents as a young athlete, that his father only made appearances at the BIG meets and generally just sat back and watched the races and would respond with constructive criticism through the use of humor, which his dad was very good about doing in a way that did not mess with Chris' psyche.

His mother was at every meet. Here I'm going to quote Chris, as I can't describe it as he does. "My mother was at every meet. I mean every meet. However, as it relates to club meets she was usually heading up the snack bar doing her best to raise funds to keep the club financially healthy as she knew this was a sport that I loved and did anything possible for the club to keep it around and me in it. Then, she would catch my race some how. I can always remember looking around to see if my mother saw the race. I did this typically right after I looked at the scoreboard. Sometimes I'd find her and others I would not. But we would get in the car ride home and I'd ask did you see my races? She would always say yes. Till this day I am convinced she hid, mostly in the event if I had a bad race, I think.

As a Coach, the experience is much more compelling. I now look in the eyes of inspiring athletes after races that they might not have performed at a top level. Some kids are drawn to tears and it is these kids that stick out in my mind. Eventually, in our conversations about the race they are drawn to make a statement. "I am afraid of what my parents are going to say or do to me in the car or when I get home. I saw them, they stormed off the deck, they're mad." At this point there is nothing more

I can do as a coach in the moment with that athlete. My teachable opportunity is lost, as their mind is no longer with me, they are in fear. So, the focus shifts to educating parents.

Here is the article/blog post from Coaching Wisdom by Coach T.

What is it about the car ride home that "drives" so many athletes from the games they love? Well-meaning parents are failing to recognize the time after a game (or practice) is critical for their child. Kids are physically and emotionally exhausted; yet parents choose to make the car ride home a "teachable moment" by commenting on the coach's decisions or their child's performance (or lack thereof).

#### Questions To Ask Your Child To Improve The Ride Home

Here are some questions parents can ask that will encourage healthy dialogue between them and their child after a game/ meet (or practice) that will allow the child to feel he/ she is still in control of their sport.

Did you do your best? This question encourages work ethic and integrity. Just like I was talking about earlier. We want to build internal motivation. We want to encourage our kids to keep going back and trying even if they didn't live up to their expectation. Even if they "failed" EVERYONE FAILS! EVERYONE! We will fail at everything. But we learn and we try something different. We want to focus on the effort, not the outcome. We want to focus on the studying, not the A. How much did you study? Were you focused? What would you do differently next time? OK. Let's try that. Let me know how I can help you. Maybe it's breaking down a study schedule on the calendar.

Were you a good person out there? This question reminds the child of sportsmanship and helps him/her to reflect on his/her behavior. Now this really relates to sports more than other activities but if it's a science fair or academic decathlon or something of this ilk, then it can and does relate. Were you a gracious competitor. Did you encourage the other participants. Did you congratulate those who one?

What did you learn? This question also causes self reflection and encourages further dialogue. this relates back to the first question, did you do your best? When you do your best and still come up short, there is a lot that can be learned there. This is an opportunity to asses many aspects of ones habits leading up to a performance, whether it's a big assignment, a test, a sports competition, a music recital or number other of things. This is the chance to self-reflect, learn where holes or weaknesses are and address them for the next time.

Did you have fun or was it enjoyable? Depending on the level of the child, the wording may change. When thinking of "fun", it's not the type of fun one would experience while at a fair or amusement park, but rather the enjoyment one receives from accomplishing a goal or helping others to achieve a common goal.

The key when asking the above questions or having the after game (or practice) conversation, it's important to remember this is not the time to "drill" your child.

Coach T talks about the

### 3 Keys to Having a Successful Car Ride Home

Let the child drive the conversation. Even in asking the questions, let the child lead. I love this advice! Sometimes we parents try to hard to force our view, our perspective onto our children. But we can't expect them to glean much if anything from that. Learning and growth are going to come through their own self-reflection and assessment, not from ours. If we let them lead, we may find a moment that we can add to that or ask a question that then invites them to go deeper.

This is a continuation from the last point and I changed this one from what Coach T had, which was "Don't lead the conversation." Because I really covered my point on that already to Meet them where they are. Remember they just finished a game or practice and they are physically and emotionally exhausted. So in this case any self-assessment and reflection may not happen at this point. Be forgiving and accepting that your amazing little human just put in a lot of effort, most likely worked hard and don't forget that most of the time we are our own worst critics so your child may already be feeling frustrated or deflated about their own performance so adding onto that is not productive. It's actually counter-productive.

Lastly and so important, Always let them know you love them and are proud of that effort no matter the outcome of the game or practice.

Stephanie had another question in her original email to me, that I will cover next week along with another new question.

I also forgot to mention earlier that I've added a link to our sponsor's amazon page on the page for this episode on my website at [YourVillageOnline.com/Podcast/Confident-Kids](https://YourVillageOnline.com/Podcast/Confident-Kids). So be sure to check them out for clean, easy application of all your diaper and other healing ointments and creams!

If you have a parenting question you'd like answered, you can send an email to [Podcast@YourVillageOnline.com](mailto:Podcast@YourVillageOnline.com).

Thanks for listening and see you next week!