

## Praise – Is It Specific and Sincere?

December 2009

### Dear Families,

We all want children to feel good about themselves and to that end, parents often praise their offspring for everything from getting out of the bed in the morning to eating all of their peas. “Good job” can be heard in classrooms and homes alike as we seek to give children a healthy dose of self-esteem.

In a recent article in *Work & Family Life*, Richard Weissbourd cautions that too much of the wrong kind of praise can backfire and have negative impacts on children. When too much praise is given without much thought it can lead to children with an over-inflated sense of ego with fewer pro-social skills, who are overly competitive or self-conscious, or even children that become hooked on praise.

If a parent wants to help a child feel good about their accomplishments, there are a few things to remember about how to praise:

- Make sure that the child has actually done something that merits attention. Children tend to know when they have really done something special and when they are being “snowed” with false praise.
- Be specific in acknowledging a child’s accomplishment. “Wow Ashley, you worked really hard to get those shoes on your feet and you did it. You even got them on the right feet.” When it is non-specific, praise can lead to confusion and a sense of “everything I do must be awesome.”
- Be sincere in your praise. Nothing cuts more than a cursory glance and an “uh-huh, good job” as an adult shoves a piece of art into a backpack. If you do not have time, state that

along with a promise. “We are in a hurry, so I can’t look at this now. I cannot wait for you to show it to me after karate.”

- Use comments to help children reflect on their own accomplishments. “The teacher said that you wrote a really nice story in your journal. What did you like best about it?” This sort of acknowledgement helps children learn to look inward for affirmation instead of always depending on other people.

Helping children feel good about themselves is a worthy family goal. When adults are more conscious about how and when they praise the children in their lives, they are more likely to raise children with a healthy and balanced sense of self.



*If you would like to respond to anything you read, have parenting questions or child development topics that you’d like to see explored in future issues of this monthly newsletter, please e-mail us at [education@tutortime.com](mailto:education@tutortime.com). We would love to hear from you!*

### Burning Off a Little Energy!

When it’s cold outside children inevitably spend more time indoors and are less likely to be physically active. Want to get them moving again? Help them burn off a little energy by just using some imagination!

You have likely seen your child spontaneously dance around the living room or run from place to place. Cooler weather seems to bring out these strong movement impulses in children if they are stuck inside during the winter. Why not take these opportunities to direct and enhance your child’s motor skills and creativity?

Here are a couple of fun suggestions for you to do at home as a family. Just remember, use your imagination and let your children help:

1. Children love to be timed at everything, so why not time them as they do chores or help you out with something? All you need is a wristwatch with a second hand. With expression in your voice, say something like, “How long will it take you to run out to the mailbox, pick up the mail and come back? Ready, get set, go!”
2. If your child has been playing with toys and it is time to clean up say, “How long will it take you to pick up the toys and put them back where they belong? Ready, get set, go!” This is a fun way to teach children responsibility about picking up after themselves. You might even choose to “race” your child to see how many toys each of you can pick up in a certain amount of time. Not only are you playing a collaborative game, but you are also teaching math skills as you count the items being put away.
3. Make a tambourine with your child.
  - Take a walk with your child outside and gather pebbles or anything else that will make noise when shaken.
  - Come back inside and get two paper plates. Invite your child to decorate the outside of the plates any way he wants.
  - Put your findings between the plates and staple all around the edges.

### What is Tutor Time® LifeSmart™?

Tutor Time® LifeSmart™ was designed by early childhood specialists and national experts to prepare children for kindergarten, elementary school and beyond. Because we know that our society places a strong emphasis on particular academic disciplines, the Tutor Time LifeSmart curriculum gives children particularly strong foundations in:

#### Reading & Writing

Our WordSmart™ and Phonics Express programs support and guide emerging writing skills in large and small group activities. The Book Center provides children with a quiet place to explore quality literature. The Language Center provides them with the tools and materials they need to explore the written word. Journaling and interactive activities extend learning at home.

#### Mathematics

Our MathSmart™ program means that counting, numbers and mathematical concepts play an important role in Tutor Time classrooms. The Math Center gives children daily opportunities to join in number games, sort and investigate patterns. During MathSmart Circle Times, teachers lead activities that allow children to actively explore important math concepts.

#### Science

Our NatureSmart™ Circle Times give children the chance to perform experiments, investigate properties and observe cause and effect. The Nature Center provides children with a rich array of natural materials and tools, encouraging them to explore their understanding of the natural world and actively build scientific thinking skills.

If you have questions about the Tutor Time® classroom experience, please speak with your director or contact us at [ttinfo@tutortime.com](mailto:ttinfo@tutortime.com).

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## Creating Character

This program invites children to explore what it means to be a person of character. This month's book is Tough Boris by Mem Fox. The story explores the life of a boy who joins pirates on a ship and discovers that they are not always massive, greedy and mean ... but that they can also be sensitive. When talking with your child, be sure to affirm his feelings. When playing a game say, "Your smile and laugh tell me you are happy when we play this."

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- Invite your child to shake a body part and then stop when he hears the word "freeze!" Shake the tambourine while singing, "Shake, shake, shake ... Shake, shake, shake ... Freeze!" Repeat several times asking him to shake other parts of his body or his whole body.
  - Trade and let your child shake the tambourine and sing while you move.
4. Bring out an imaginary box and tell your child that there are elves inside. Explain that since the elves have never seen your house, you will have to take them on a tour. Each of you should reach inside the box and bring out an elf and place it on your bent elbow in front of your bodies. Walk through the house moving the elf to different parts of your body while you give your tour. Try putting your elf on your nose, your hip, and then one of your shoulders. Can you balance your elf on your knee while you walk and talk? When you are done with the tour, dance around the house with your elf on various body parts!
  5. Teach your child about healthful foods and activities. The next time you hear "Mom, I'm hungry," ask your daughter to go to the refrigerator and make a healthy choice. Try saying, "You make the decision and I will time you. Ready, set, go!" She will love racing to the refrigerator, peering inside and seeing what choices she has. On days where she breaks her current record, do something special like adding dashes of cinnamon to her apple choice. This treat is fabulous for young children because cinnamon helps to boost the immune system and the apple is full of vitamins and fiber.

Now come up with some of your own ideas. Remember to enjoy these wonderful moments of uninhibited movements with your children.

## Extend the Tutor Time® Experience Into Your Home

**There are many ways to support your child's growth and development at home. Here are some activities you can do together that will build all of your child's Smarts.**

**Infants** – Place some of your child's favorite toys on the floor. Cover them up using a blanket or towel. Ask your child where the toys went. Wait a few seconds to see if he takes the blanket off. If not, take the blanket off and say, "Here they are!"

**Toddlers/Twaddlers** – Gather some of your child's small soft toys and place them on the floor along with a laundry basket. Encourage your child to drop the toys into the basket. Move the basket away and see if she can toss them in.

**Preppers** – Place three or four items inside of a bag. Have your child reach into the bag and try to identify the item without looking at it. Bring the item out and see if she was correct.

**Preschool/Pre-K** – Choose a color and see how many different things your child can name that are that color. You might need to give him some clues. Write down his ideas and add to it later on. You could even have other members of the family come up with items also.

**Kindergarten/Adventure Club** – Have your child go on a scavenger hunt inside or outside of the house. Have them find something that makes noise, something that tastes good, something that smells yucky and something that has more than three colors.

## Tutor Time Smart Article

If I asked you to draw a zoad with blethra sides, what would you make? Often times, adults immediately pick up a pencil and paper, and then stare at it. Several questions arise including, "What am I drawing? What's a zoad? What's a blethra? Are you serious?" Some adults decide to be creative and draw whatever comes to mind, while others talk to peers to try and figure out answers, and still others look around the room to see if there are any clues. These three responses exhibit three different styles of learning: body, verbal and visual. Not only do adults learn this way, but so do children.

Children are like blank slates. They have only been in the world for a couple of years, which means they have a lot to learn. Through experiencing the world with their bodies, through language and through the environment children begin to form meaning of the world around them. In the Tutor Time classroom, teachers help children create meaning in a number of different areas, including mathematics. As the child participates in classroom activities, they are developing their MathSmart™ skills through the different learning styles mentioned above.

During small group activities, children are invited to use their bodies to put together shape puzzles and use language to express how many pieces are in the puzzle. During large group experiences children are invited to visually see how many children voted for a certain book as their favorite and use language to count the amount

out loud. During Active Investigation Time, children are invited to work in the block area where they use their bodies to build towers. They use language to express to others how tall the tower is after measuring it. They visually match the blocks to the picture shapes and see the written word describing the shape on the labels on the shelf as they put the blocks away.

There are a variety of ways children become MathSmart through Tutor Time's LifeSmart™ classrooms. As children work with materials in the classroom, communicate about math and see math in their environment they learn the meaning behind numbers, shapes and concepts. This prepares your child for future math problems as she becomes a life long MathSmart learner.

Referring back to the beginning of this article, consider another situation. If I asked you to draw a square with four sides you immediately know what to do. This is because the word "square" and the word "four" have meaning to you, whereas the words "zoad" and "blethra" do not. Unlike many adults, young children are still learning the meaning to the words four and square – and that is important to keep in mind. That's why Tutor Time is proud to be a part of your child's life and support them through these developmental milestones.



## Focus on Learning



When you pick up your child at the end of a long day, you may reflect on all of the events that have occurred since you last saw him. You had an important meeting which led to your plan getting approved, you caught up on your co-workers lives over lunch and you finished a stack of paperwork. As you realize everything you did, you may wonder what your child was up to all this time. To support you in understanding the various educational experiences your child has been involved with, your teacher displays children's work, provides you with a daily recap, and if your child is in Preschool or Pre-K, gives you a Documentation of Learning sheet on a regular basis.



Documentation of Learning sheets are unique to the LifeSmart™ curriculum. They are different than worksheets because they ask your child to use higher levels of thinking to complete them. They also document an enriched educational experience where your child used a variety of different senses to learn about science, math, literacy, art or music. The Documentation of Learning sheets have a descriptive paragraph for you to understand what your child did and learned at the very top. The next time your teacher provides you with a Documentation of Learning sheet ask your child to tell you about the experience she participated in while completing it.



Documentation of Learning:  
"How Many Pennies?"

Note to families:  
In this activity your child used critical thinking to predict how many pennies were in an opaque container. After guessing, they counted how many pennies were actually inside the tub, to strengthen developing math skills. By tracing the pennies, they worked on one-to-one correspondence and fine motor skills.

Prediction: I guess that there are 100   in the container.

 Here is a drawing of my guess:  


Result: There were actually 36   in the container.

 Here is a drawing of the result:  


Write your name here: DANNY

4/23/08