

Thursday

But What If I Damage Their Psyche? (Uh . . . What's a Psyche?)

Kids need Acceptance, Belonging, and Competence—the pillars of self-esteem. But there's a big difference between praise and encouragement.

The Kickoff

1. What are your top three expectations for your child right now?

2. On a scale of 1 to 10, how important is it to you that your child “feels good” about himself or herself? Explain.

Watch

Watch “Thursday—But What If I Damage Their Psyche?” on *Have a New Kid* by Friday DVD.

Thursday

- babies of the family

5. Why do parents always call on firstborn children when they want to get a job done? How might this lead to many of them becoming leaders in life? How can you encourage the best in your firstborn?
6. Why do middle children often feel "lost in the middle"? How can you encourage the best in your middle child?
7. How can you encourage responsibility in your baby of the family?
8. Why is it important to expect the best of your children and to avoid comparing them to each other?

9. Why does treating every child equally sound so good, when in practice, it's the wrong thing to do?

10. Why is it so important that your child feels accepted and knows she belongs to your family, and that you view her as competent?

Taking It Deeper

If you go out of your way to clear life's roads for your child—to do things for him that he should be doing for himself—you might think you're helping him with his self-esteem. But what are you really doing? Sending a negative message: "I think you're so stupid that you can't do it yourself . . . so I'll do it for you."

And if you remind kids more than once, you're saying, "You're so dumb I don't think you're going to get it, so I'll say it again." Actually, saying it once consistently increases your chance that you'll be heard and your instructions followed.

Every child lives up to the expectation you have for him or her.

1. What things do you think are important to do for children? What things should they do for themselves? Where do you draw the line as a parent on what to do and what not to do?

Thursday

2. How do you decide where to set the bar for your child? What does it have to do with where your parents set the bar for you?

3. Dr. Leman likes to say, "An unhappy child is a healthy child." Do you agree? Why or why not?

4. When are you motivated to change something in your life? How can you apply this insight to parenting your children?

5. What's the difference between feeling good and having self-worth?

6. How can you show your child unconditional acceptance yet also hold her accountable for her actions? Brainstorm some ideas based on a situation that's happening in your home right now.

7. What's the difference between praise and encouragement? How can you model encouragement in your own home? What might you say to your child today, for starters?

8. What do the following verses say about praise, encouragement, and reward?

Give her the reward she has earned,
and let her works bring her praise at the city gate. (Prov. 31:31)

I do not accept praise from men. (John 5:41)

Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing. (1 Thess. 5:11)

Encourage your hearts and strengthen you in every good deed and word. (2 Thess. 2:17)

If you want to empower your children, accept and love them unconditionally and provide opportunities for responsibility.

Make your relationship a priority over activities that take you away from home. If there is no sense of belonging in your home, there will be no relationship, and your children will be drawn toward acceptance and belonging in a group outside your home.

Thursday

Give your children responsibility and encourage their efforts so they feel proud of their accomplishments. Praise links a child's worth to what he or she does; encouragement emphasizes the act. When you say, "Good job," what does that child think? *Hey, I can do this. My mom and dad believe I can do it. They're thinking the best of me. So let's see what I can do.* Parent, you matter much more in your child's world than you think!

Remember

- Expect the best, get the best.
- To empower your child, accept and love them unconditionally and provide opportunities for responsibility.
- Praise links a child's worth to what he or she does; encouragement emphasizes the act.

My Game Plan for Today

Brainstorm ways to:

1. Show my child unconditional Acceptance.
2. Emphasize Belonging in our family.
3. Spur my child on to Competence.

4. Encourage—rather than praise—my child.

Aha Moments

Prayer

- For myself, as I empower my children through the ABCs—the three pillars of self-esteem—in my home.
- For the nudge I need as a reminder to change my praise to encouragement when I open my mouth.
- For my colleagues, as we learn from each other's successes and failures how to be godly parents.