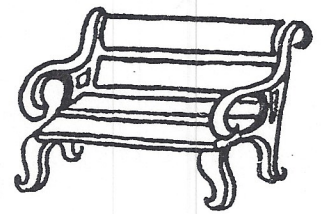


# The Park Bench School of Parenting

Years ago parents got most of their child-rearing information from each other. Articles in the Park Bench School of Parenting are written to revive that custom. If you belong to a parents' group, use these articles as discussion starters. Or ask a friend what he or she would do in a similar situation. Listen to different viewpoints and decide for yourself what's best for your family.



## Encouragement: Give It in Daily Doses

Here's Amanda, age six. Amanda's in kindergarten and not doing too well. She has as much ability as the other children in her class, maybe more. But her teacher doesn't know it. Amanda never raises her hand to answer a question. She's reluctant to try new things. If she runs into trouble with an assignment, she simply gives up and says, "I can't do it."

If confidence and determination could be swallowed like vitamins, Amanda's family would buy out the store. Almost everyone wants these traits for their children.

It's no wonder. Confidence gives children a willingness to tackle new tasks. It provides hope and a sense of *I can do it*. And when the going gets rough, determination kicks in to keep them going. Unlike vitamins, however, confidence and determination can't be taken in one-a-day gulps.

There is something you can give your child, however: encouragement. Daily doses of encouragement can build your child up like nothing else.

Encouragement is powerful. But how does it work? And when do you use it?

**Always give credit for trying.** Trying takes courage because it carries with it the risk of failing. Let your child know that what YOU admire is the person who is out there making an effort.

After all, it's hard work to learn something new, to struggle through not doing it well at first, and to have to wait to improve. Giving credit for trying provides more encouragement than even the highest praise for success.

**Take time to be interested.** When your child shouts, "Watch me!" at the playground, look as

amazed as possible, even if it's the seventeenth time you've seen him jump from the bottom of the slide. To kids, there's no substitute for knowing you're being taken seriously.

Grown-ups and kids aren't always fascinated by the same things. You may have to remind yourself to tune in to your child's interests. When you do, you're giving a big dose of encouragement. Your sincere attention says, "I care about what you think and do."

**Believe in your child's abilities.** Children who are trusted to do well usually do. If, on the other hand, you expect your children to let you down, they'll often meet that expectation, too.

When your child is learning something new, be sure to let her know that you've especially noticed the parts she's done well. Point out her strengths. It's like a spotlight of approval. In its warmth, she's more likely to perform well—and feel capable of improving.

Give your child daily doses of encouragement:

- Give credit for trying.
- Take time to be interested.
- Trust your child to do well.

It's the best way to make confidence and determination grow.

### Parents Need Encouragement, Too

Kids aren't the only ones who need daily doses of encouragement. Be sure to give some to yourself.

- Give yourself credit for trying as a parent.
- Take time for your own interests.
- Trust yourself to do well.

# YOU CAN'T HELP ME UNTIL YOU KNOW WHAT I CAN'T DO

To the young child, all the world seems to focus on "ME". He/she does not doubt that even the wild forces of nature are somehow centered around him or her. To enhance a child's total growth, we must begin to look "inside" to see things as he/she sees them and know what they are ready for.

## WHAT I CAN'T DO

**I CAN'T SHARE** - Possession is one device the young child uses to hammer out autonomy. Just as babbling comes before talking, so owning comes before sharing. To fully share, a person must first fully possess.

**I CAN'T EMPATHIZE WITH ANOTHER'S FEELINGS** - Because most young children are at, what Piaget calls Egocentric stage, they are unable to put themselves in the place of the actor, to empathize with another's feelings. Saying "sorry", and meaning it, is truly impossible.

**I CAN'T COLLECT INFORMATION** - Most children only remember what is important to them. The statement, "I just told you to walk in this room", in most cases the child does not remember that you did just tell him/her. "I have told you a hundred times to pick up your dirty clothes and put them in the clothes basket." This statement is another example of an adult wish for children to be like adults forgetting they are children.

**I CAN'T CENTER ON MORE THAN ONE ASPECT AT A TIME** - "Pick up your toys, put on your shoes, and wash your face, we are going out to play." This statement has four aspects. 1. pick your toys up; 2. put on your shoes; 3. wash your face; 4. we are going out to play. Most young children, if they can remember it at all, will remember the last or the most important to them, but with so many other aspects, will forget because of the confusion.

**I CAN'T REVERSE WHAT HAS BEEN DONE** - If a child reaches to put his/her finger in an electric wall outlet and you say "don't", the child is confused because he/she doesn't know how to reverse this action. "Pull your hand back, that is dangerous." Reverses the situation by putting in words that you want the child to reverse.

**I CAN'T CONSERVE** - When you want a child to pour a glass of milk or juice and you hand a full pitcher, expect the child to pour all the milk into the glass even if it pours all over the floor or table. Because they can't see the difference, they have no idea that all the milk or juice won't fit in that small glass.

**I CAN'T TELL YOU THE TRUTH WHEN YOU SET ME UP** - If you have seen a child do something that you dislike, and you ask them if they have done it, they will probably say "no". Wouldn't you if you knew what the consequences might be? Don't ask the child if you know what has happened. That only sets them up.

**I CAN'T SIT DOWN FOR VERY LONG** - The young child is often in a quandary because a parent or a teacher is telling them to sit still while their body is telling them to move. When the large muscles in a preschoolers arms and legs are growing rapidly, they cry out for exercise. As a result, the preschool child moves all the time.

**I CAN'T PLAY WITH ANOTHER CHILD UNTIL I AM READY** - Children go through different stages of social interaction. If allowed to grow and change at their own pace, they will begin to interact with other children.

**I CAN'T TELL THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN REAL AND FANTASY** - When a child has a dream, it is very real to them. Telling them not to be a "baby" or to go to sleep is very difficult. Playing fantasy is real for the child and very important for control and development.

**I CAN'T EXPRESS MY FEELINGS IN WORDS VERY WELL** - Children resort to physical means of communication because they don't have words to express their frustration., You can help by giving the children words to use.

**I CAN'T TAKE TURNS** - Try not to put young children in situations where they have to take turns.

**I CAN'T HAVE PERSPECTIVE** - The only real difference between children and adults in emotional development is experience. Adults have been around a lot longer, most children have to face their own problems and deal with the world as they see it. When you are only four, you feel things more.

**I CAN'T THINK IN TERMS OF RIGHT AND WRONG** - Many young children can't even think in terms of cause and effect. Even when applied directly to them. The little boy runs up to the curb and stops. He might not go in the street because he remembers what Mom and Dad said about danger, but he also might go in the street not knowing what the effect will be. We must protect the child--they cannot be responsible until they are developmentally ready.

**I CAN'T BE READY BEFORE I'M READY** - Children all grow and develop at their own rate not ours. Stop comparing and forcing children to move before they are ready.