

**The Challenge:** We often use praise to uplift or thank others.

**The Science:** However, if we do it the wrong way, we can actually harm them!

**The Solution:** Learn to give the *right* kind of praise.

Praise is a wonderful way to show our love and appreciation for others. However, did you know that some kinds of praise are not helpful and that other kinds of praise are incredibly empowering? Before you start celebrating others, learn to give them the right kind of praise!

## Why is mindset important?

Carol Dweck, Stanford Professor of psychology has identified two mindsets, 'fixed' and 'growth'. Our mindset affects the way we interact with and make sense of the world, and how motivated we are to learn new things.

- 🌀 If you have a 'fixed' mindset you believe that people's abilities and talents are fixed traits – in other words, that you have a certain amount of skill and that you can't do much to change or improve upon them.
- 🌀 If you have a 'growth' mindset you believe that, with practice, we can improve our abilities and learn new skills. You are more likely to challenge yourself and to try to improve your skills.

For example, one study shows that students who believe (or are taught) that intellectual abilities can be developed (as opposed to being characteristics that are fixed) are more likely to succeed in challenging classes and show high achievement through tough transitions.

## Person Praise

Carol Dweck's research has established a link between the way in which we offer praise and criticism to others, and people's mindset. 'Person praise' and criticism, according to Dweck, communicates and reinforces a belief in fixed or permanent traits, and encourages a fixed mindset. Examples of person praise are: "You're so clever!" or "You're a natural artist!" Person-focused criticism, similarly, also emphasizes fixed traits; for example: "You're not very clever" or "You're terrible at that".

## Process Praise

'Process praise', on the other hand, centres around someone's behaviour rather than on a fixed trait. It focuses on *what someone did* not *who someone is*.

Instead of saying, "You're so clever", you might give process praise such as, "I really liked the detailed way in which you explained that topic. It's clear you have spent a lot of time studying this area". Similarly, process-focused criticism emphasizes actions, not traits. For example, instead of saying, "You're a really horrible presenter", you could say, "The chart you showed was a little confusing. You might want to consider splitting the information into two diagrams next time".

## Praise, Criticism and Mindset

We often offer person praise to others with the best of intentions. Someone does something we think is brilliant, and our immediate response is "You're so brilliant!" It just feels like the right thing to say. However, while this kind of praise can give people a short-term self-esteem boost, in the long-term, it can be very detrimental. Dweck's research has found that person praise and criticism reinforces a fixed mindset, which can make people more hesitant to take on new challenges in the future. This will prevent them from achieving their best. Process praise, on the other hand, has been shown in numerous studies to cultivate a growth mindset, and increase people's motivation to keep learning and taking on new challenges.

## An example of praise in action

A music student gives a stellar performance.

	PERSON COMPLIMENT/PRAISE	PROCESS COMPLIMENT/PRAISE
Example	"You are such a brilliant musician"	"We can really tell how hard you worked at practising this piece of music. We're so proud of you "
Effect on thinking	Evokes a fixed mindset	Evokes a growth mindset
Effect on feeling (short term)	Evokes a sense of pride and satisfaction	Evokes a sense of pride and satisfaction
Effect on behaviour (long term)	-Feels nervous to try new challenges for fear of failing and not being a "brilliant musician" -Less effort -Less endurance and confidence and poor recovery from setbacks -Defensive response to failure	-Embracing challenges and will try another difficult problem -More effort and confident when encounters something new -More motivated to learn -Will see mistakes as learning opportunities

## What you can do:

- ✿ Focus on giving process praise to others. In your interactions with children, friends, or co-workers, try to focus on peoples' behaviour. When someone does something great, resist the urge to simply say, "You're so great!" and instead tell them, *what specifically they did* that was so wonderful.
- ✿ Notice your patterns. How often do you find yourself giving person praise and to whom? Become more aware of your patterns so you can work on shifting them.
- ✿ Praise *yourself* effectively. When something goes well for you, or conversely, when something goes wrong, what so you tell yourself? Notice if you are attributing your success or failure to a fixed trait, or to a behaviour that you can change or repeat. Remember to give *yourself* process-focused praise as well!

## The bottom line

When offering praise and encouragement, focus on their process and behaviours. You will be helping them to cultivate a 'growth' mindset, which can lead to increased motivation and continued learning and growth.

For further information/strategies:

### Books:

**Mindset** by Carol Dweck

**Growth Mindset Pocketbook** by Barry Hymer and Mark Gershon

### Web:

The effect of praise on mindsets (3 mins)

<http://www.bing.com/videos/search?q=YouTube+Carol+Dweck+Ted&Form=VQFRVP&adlt=strict#view=detail&mid=594E61C45CE46FAF1AF2594E61C45CE46FAF1AF2>

The Perils and Promises of Praise (Dweck article)

<http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership/oct07/vol65/num02/The-Perils-and-Promises-of-Praise.aspx>

How not to talk to your kids (Po Bronsen Article)

<http://nymag.com/news/features/27840/>

You Tube talk explaining mindsets

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PeDeOwSAoro> (18 mins)

(Adapted from: Katie Conlon – <http://www.fulfillmentdaily.com/author/katie/> )

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Education Services  
Sir Charles Frossard House  
La Charroterie, St Peter Port  
Guernsey  
GY1 1FH  
Tel 01481 733000