

# The SOLUTION source

Thunder Bay Counselling Centre Newsletter  
By Colleen Ginter, Clinical Counsellor at Thunder Bay Counselling Centre

For You & Your Family

Fall 2013

## The Joy of PARENTING

Welcome to our Autumn 2013 newsletter. Enter the world of the modern parent. What do most parents answer when they are asked the question “what do you want for your children”? Most often they want their children to grow up to be happy, compassionate, peaceful, responsible and caring adults. But we often struggle with the process of getting there. We ask ourselves. Am I being too strict? Am I being too lenient? What do I do when she doesn't listen?

The following are some suggestions to consider when you find yourself doubting your parenting.

### Ten Specific Compliments to Give Your Children

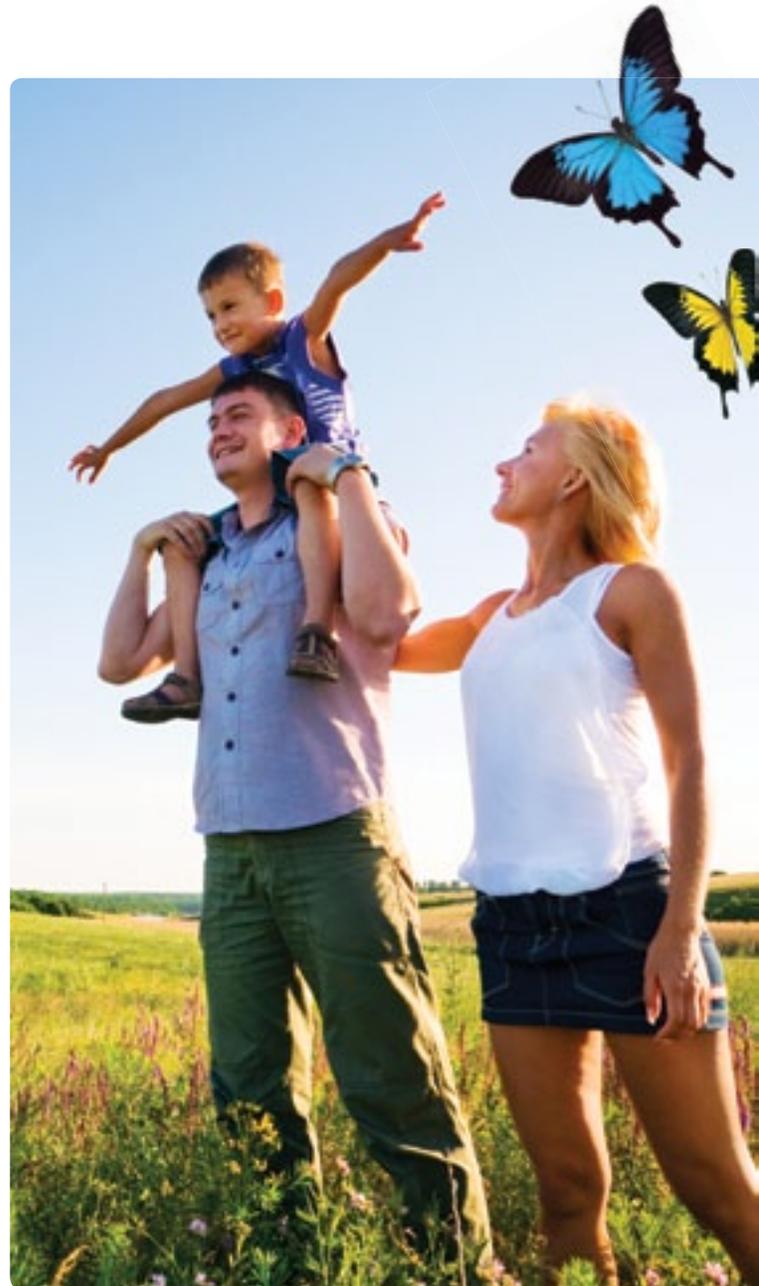
Is it OK? How much is too much? What's the difference between hopeful encouraging and lying? When is praise inflationary? How can I be objective?

Fact is, children look to their parents for encouragement and finding affirmation at home is foundational to positive emotional development. Parents need to be in the business of building our children up. But we also need to be honest and it's important to use compliments that really mean something. Kids can sense disingenuousness and empty praise. Making stuff up is harmful; false praise is dishonest and the practice breaks trust.

Here are 10 compliments all kids need to hear:

#### 1. Recognize and compliment character:

We live in a world where integrity is neither consistently taught nor widely expected. When our children demonstrate honesty, kindness, trustworthiness and reliability, that's a great time to take them aside and offer a sincere compliment.



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## 2. Compliment obedience and respect:

It's too easy to fall into patterns of disapproval, where the only time we notice is when kids do wrong. Rather than waiting for disobedience or disrespect (then coming down like a ton of bricks) try noticing obedience and respect: "I don't always remember to tell you, but you are an awesome young man and I appreciate the way you treat your mother".

## 3. Appreciate them for simply being part of the family:

"Every time I see you, I'm thankful that I'm a dad." Kids need to understand that they are valued simply because they are.

## 4. Compliment contributions to the family

"Clearing the table (sweeping the porch...putting out the trash) makes a real difference. I appreciate your contribution." Kids need to understand that what they do makes a difference, that the adults notice and that pitching in is a good part of family life.

## 5. Compliment the quality of a child's work

"This is one clean porch, mister!" "You mowed the lawn right up to the edge. Way to go! I'm so glad you take this job so seriously, it shows." Doing a job at a high standard is always worth noting.

## 6. We can compliment the effort, even when the result is not the best:

"Your willingness to help makes me happy! Now we need to take a look at how you can get the trash to the curb without leaving a trail!" Compliments can be an important part of our role as teachers.

## 7. It's important that we compliment children when they achieve something new:

"Wow! That's a huge leap forward for you there in math, pal." "Awesome! I'm not at all surprised after you worked so hard." A well-placed compliment can keep a positive ball rolling.

## 8. We can compliment sense of style even if we don't exactly share their taste:

We don't want to hedge kids into being clones of dad or mom. "When it comes to putting together an outfit, you certainly have some flair!" "I can tell that you put a lot of thought into the way you look." "I've never seen a table set quite like that before - you have an amazing imagination!" It's not useful to limit compliments to the narrow range of our own taste.

## 9. Compliment steps toward a long-term goal:

"Son, the improvement you're showing is commendable. Thanks for trying." Waiting for perfection before we're willing to dish out a compliment is inefficient, may dampen enthusiasm and does little to help the process of growth.

## 10. Try complimenting their friends:

But only do this when you can do it honestly! "Your friends are the greatest!" "That Jimmy is such a positive young man." "You know, it gives me a lot of confidence to know you use common sense in choosing your friends."

(All Pro Dad)

# The Truth, The Whole Truth and Nothing but The Truth!!!

## Parent's Guide to Encouraging Your Kids to Tell the Truth

### Strategies to Use at Every Age:

- 1. Provide a good role model. The most important thing you can do is to demonstrate the importance of honesty in your own daily activities.** Pay the full ticket price for kids who look small for their age. Resist making excuses when you get a parking ticket.
- 2. Identify the underlying causes.** Kids may lie for many reasons. Often, they're trying to avoid being punished. They may also be afraid of disappointing you. Or they may even be trying to conceal unpleasant facts from themselves! When you know what your child is feeling, you're better positioned to respond appropriately.

- 3. Reward truthfulness.** Let your kids know that honest pays. Even if they accidentally break a neighbour's window when they're playing softball, praise them for coming clean about it.
- 4. Impose reasonable consequences.** Kids are more likely to cover things up if they're unsure what will happen to them or if they fear punishment. Try to be consistent with how you discipline them. You set the rules for your own household, but it may be helpful to survey what other parents do in the same circumstance.
- 5. Talk about values.** Begin early with discussing values with your kids. Talk about the benefits of being honest and treating people well. Use examples from everyday life or the daily news to illustrate your points.
- 6. Remain calm.** Your kids will likely be more attentive if you keep your emotions in check. It can be distressing to find out your child deceived you, but focus on resolving the conflict.

7. **Avoid show downs. Make it as easy as possible for your kids to be honest.** If you already know they told a fib, ask them how you can work together to improve the situation instead of putting them on the spot to elicit a confession.
8. **Assume innocence.** Some studies claim that people lie three times a day or more. Still, that means we're telling the truth most of the time. Give your kids the benefit of the doubt to preserve trust and harmony.
9. **See professional help.** If you're concerned that your child shows destructive patterns of deception, consider professional counselling to learn more effective ways to interact.

### Strategies to Use at Specific Stages

1. **Wait until kids know fact from fiction. Most kids are unable to understand the distinction between telling the truth and telling a lie until they are about 5 years old.** You can start training them in the right direction, but punishment is meaningless when it's premature.
2. **Indulge fantasies.** Imaginary friends are part of growing up. As long as your children seem happy and comfortable with real people, encourage their sense of play.
3. **Recognize your child's growing independence.** As they enter the tween years, kids are likely to begin keeping more secrets. Keep the lines of communication open, but respect their growing need for autonomy.
4. **Enforce limits with teens.** On the threshold of adulthood, teens face many decisions that could determine their future. Set clear rules for telling the whole truth about driving, drinking and other priority subjects.

Most people lie from time to time, including kids. Setting a good example, discussing values, and rewarding honesty are the most effective ways to encourage your children to tell the truth. – Say W.com



## Parenting Styles

Taking a look at your parenting style can be the first step to becoming a better parent. You can adjust your parenting techniques to move towards a moderate style.

Many parents struggle daily to create a positive, nurturing and safe environment for their children. The road parents thought they were on may have turned into something different. Are you still on the same parenting path that you envisioned, or have you detoured onto a road with so many potholes that you can't seem to move ahead?

In her book *Kids Are Worth It! Giving Your Child the Gift of Inner Discipline* (Somerville House Publishing, 1995), Barbara Coloroso discusses three types of parenting styles.

1. The brick wall family
2. The jellyfish family
3. The backbone family

Like any other tidy trilogy, these three styles represent the continuum of parenting methods from the overly strict and rigid to the overly lax and noncommittal with the sought after moderate in between.

### The Brick Wall Family

The brick wall family is characterized by parents obsessed with order, control and obedience. Perfection is the goal and anything less is a disappointment. "I don't know why you can't get straight A's like your sister."

As well, in brick wall families love is conditional. "I know you would never behave that way at school, my child would never do that." Kids are not taught to think for themselves, "Do you really like that outfit? You look much better in the other one." Coloroso says children from brick wall families lack self-esteem and are often at risk of sexual promiscuity, drug abuse and suicide.

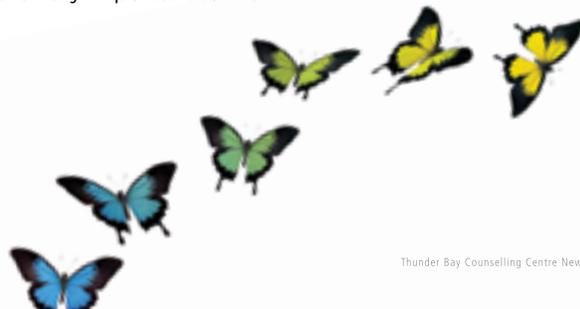
### The Jellyfish Family

The jellyfish family is at the other extreme. Instead of rigidity, it is characterized by lack of structure, consistency and safe boundaries. "He's only a child, why should he have to do chores?" In jellyfish families there is often chaos in the environment, a lack of structure and rules, and bribes and threats are often used. "I told you not to wear those high heels, you can't even walk!" Again, because of lack of strong self-esteem, Coloroso says kids are at risk.

### The Backbone Family

The backbone family is somewhere in the middle. Coloroso points out the six critical messages parents send to their children in the way they treat them:

1. I believe in you.
2. I trust you.
3. I know you can handle life situations.
4. You are listened to.
5. You are cared for.
6. You are very important to me.





Rules are established and changed as children grow. "You can decide if you go skiing or not, but if you do, you must wear a helmet." Children receive unconditional love. "I love spending time with you." Children are taught to think for themselves. "What are some ways you might solve that problem?" In backbone families, children are at low risk because of the on-going interactions with their parents that foster self-esteem.

In his book *Family First: Your Step-by-Step Plan for Creating a Phenomenal Family*, Phil McGraw says to solve problems effectively, you must be willing to adjust and adapt your parenting style to each child's needs, behaviour and temperament.

## Moving Toward Moderation in Parenting

Try taking one step in the direction of a backbone family:

- Be willing to admit when you are wrong.
- Don't use shame to control your child.
- Help your child learn to cope with setbacks.

The reality is that most parents will use a mixture of the above styles. Instead of pressuring yourself to fit perfectly into a moderate style, think about moving towards a moderate approach to parenting. If you find yourself being overly rigid one day or lacking firmness another, take a step towards becoming a backbone parent.

Finding Your Authoritative Voice is another way of moving toward a moderate style of parenting that may be used by a backbone parent. When you move in this direction you are giving your child the opportunity to develop strong self-esteem and know her self-worth while avoiding the risks associated with extreme parenting.

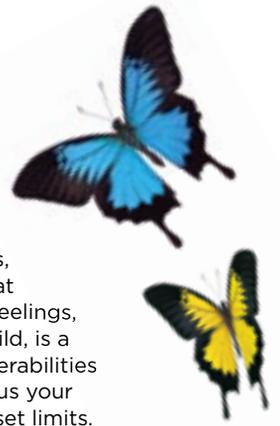
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## Acceptance and Commitment Therapy: An Approach to Parenting

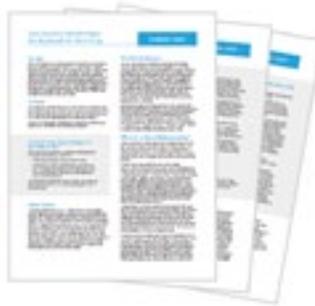
(The Joy of Parenting by Lisa Coyne and Amy Murrell)

Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) is a therapeutic approach that emphasizes compassionate acknowledgement and acceptance of our own experiences, in the service of effectively pursuing those things in life that matter most to us. How you approach your thoughts and feelings, especially in the context of your relationships with your child, is a key ingredient of effective parenting. Your values and vulnerabilities serve as lenses through which you view your child and focus your choices in how to nurture him, provide him guidance, and set limits.



## Accept, Choose, and Take Action

Acceptance and commitment therapy (ACT) helps you notice your thoughts and feelings without being controlled by them. It helps you to act on your values concerning your children rather than to react to what your mind tells you. You can easily remember the components of an ACT-based approach to parenting by simply thinking A-C-T: accept (A), choose (C), take action (T).



Take a few moments to complete the Acceptance and Commitment Therapy exercise sheet.

Visit [www.tbaycounselling.com](http://www.tbaycounselling.com)



The Counselling Centre of East Algoma's Crisis Response Service offers confidential support and counselling to people living or visiting in the District of East Algoma (from Spanish to Iron Bridge including Elliot Lake). A crisis can be triggered by an unexpected event or loss (ie. job/relationship). It might be something that you have been coping with for a while that you feel you can no longer manage, like stress at work or school, feeling alone, or thoughts of suicide. You may be having symptoms of depression, anxiety, other mental health concerns and/or addiction.

### Call us for help:

Weekdays 8:30 am to 4:30 pm - 705-848-2585  
After hours and on weekends - 1-800-721-0070

### Drop in/In person:

9 Oakland Blvd, Suite 2 (Elliot Lake) 8:30 to 4:30 weekdays. No appointment necessary. For those outside Elliot Lake, call to arrange a suitable location. We will come see you at a safe location - home, school, shelter, treatment facility, or a familiar agency where you feel safe.

### After Hours:

Support is provided after 4:30 pm on weekdays and all weekend long by calling the Sault Area Hospital Crisis Line at 1-800-721-0070