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MOTIVATED

THE MAGAZINE THAT MOVES YOU!

THE ENCOURAGEMENT EXPERIMENT

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It is human nature to form quick opinions based on the things we see and hear, without taking the time to dig deeper. Judging by mere appearances can limit our ability to see others as they truly are, but if we're honest, most of us would probably admit to doing just that, at least some of the time. Here's a passage that got me thinking about how I see others:

"It takes love, hope, faith, and understanding to nourish the possibilities in another and to believe that there is more to a person than meets the eye. You may think you know a person well enough to know that he is beyond changing, but what if the tables were turned? Would you consider how people view and treat you to be a fair representation of who you really are, and how *you* would want to be treated?"—Author unknown

We all thrive on receiving appreciation from those around us. We gain confidence when we know that someone values our thoughts. We could all do more to help those around us flourish. It doesn't cost much to show confidence in people. We may be pleasantly surprised what happens to someone when they're at the receiving end of a little appreciation.

If we want to see the world and those around us change, let's start by believing that others are more than they appear to be. Let's try to draw out the good in those around us, appreciate individuals for who they are, and acknowledge their gifts and talents. When we highlight the good in them, that good can flourish even more.

Christina Lane
For *Motivated*

The Encouragement Experiment

By Irena Žabičková, adapted



At some point in our lives, we've all had someone say a few words of encouragement that radically changed our day or the course of events, just because of the extra inspiration and change of perspective those words brought. Maybe we were at the end of our rope, and someone's encouragement opened a whole new horizon of possibilities. Or maybe we'd simply had a long and tiring day, and a few cheerful words renewed our inspiration and energy.

One day my husband did an experiment that has since served as a reminder to me to be generous in passing encouragement on to others.

We were on a bike ride, following a mountain trail, and as usual we'd brought our dog Iris with us. She loves to hike in the mountains and is also a very fast runner.

As we were laboriously pedaling up the hill, she was literally running circles around us, bursting with speed and energy. On the downhill, however, she had a hard time keeping up. We were just a little faster than she, and although at first she made an effort to run alongside us, she soon got discouraged and stopped trying.

At that point the logical solution was to slow down and let her catch up with us. But before doing that, my husband said, "Let's see what encouragement can do." And continuing downhill he called out to Iris, "C'mon, Iris, you can do it! You're such a fast dog, you can keep up with us! Run!"

Instantly, Iris seemed to be filled with renewed energy and speed, and she caught up with us, happy to be by our side once again. But as the words of encouragement ceased, she started losing that extra momentum and slowed down yet again. A new shower of encouragement propelled her forward once more.

Eventually, we did slow down to make it easier for her, but the experiment will forever remain in my memory as an example of the power of positive words, and the difference they can make. It reminds me to try to give the gift of encouragement to those around me. It's a simple act that can give people the boost they need to reach their full potential.

Is there a coworker or a family member with whom you are at a standstill in your relationship? Try the power of encouragement and appreciation, and you might see your relationship blossom with renewed energy and freshness. ■

The Perfect Life

By Chris Mizrany, adapted

I love photography. When I got my first camera—a cheap point and shoot—I thrilled to the new world of possibilities. I took it everywhere and captured a lot of memories, till the day it fell against a hillside rock and failed me forever after.

Then I upgraded to a bridge camera with more options, and a much greater built-in zoom. This was my pride and joy for years, though eventually my skills outgrew it as well. I wanted something that took the photo as soon as I pressed the button.

Eventually, I got a DSLR. It was good quality, fast, and presented a huge learning curve. Just what I wanted. No more missed moments. Or so I thought.

As I learned more, I became ultra-concerned about getting perfectly in-focus pictures. I kept searching for ways to always get sharp photos. I'd frantically change settings hoping for a better result, often taking my eyes off the events unfolding in front of me. I'd be frustrated even if I captured what I wanted but the result was anything less than perfectly sharp.

Then one day I read an article by an eminent photographer. He said something profound: "Photography is about feelings, not technical perfection. It's about showing the emotion you felt at a scene to your viewers, not just showing

your skill at controlling the camera."

Suddenly I understood that it's really not about the settings, the sharpness, or even my skill. It's about telling the story. Amateurs want their images to be perfect. Professionals want their images to be poignant, to make an impression.

In our lives, we strive to get our hair, bodies, phone, car, job, food, relationships (and the list goes on) in perfect shape. In the process, we often overlook the joy of life itself. It is good to use our skills to improve our and others' lives. But we don't have to become so focused on overcoming life's imperfections that we don't savor the moments all around us.

Life is a massive collage of innumerable moments every day. Does it matter if every moment is perfect? Does it matter if any moment is perfect? Not really. They're all a part of the big picture, and it wouldn't be complete without even one. So don't hurry through life, purging moments from attention or memory because they're "lacking" in some way.

Let's take time to stop when "we don't have time." Let's take deep breaths when we're stressed. Let's live lovingly even when we're treated badly. Let's create a life that others will look at and be encouraged by. We can't always impress those around us, but we can leave an impression. ■

Birthday Messenger

By Anna Perlini, adapted

On my birthday, I often experience mixed feelings—on the one hand, I wish I could escape to a lonely island; on the other hand, the extra attention does feel good. Either way, I'll say with Todd Stocker: "A happy birthday is measured not in the amount of gifts one gets, but in the amount one is loved."

Paolo, a dear friend and colleague of mine for the last 18 years, has made it a point and a personal goal to remember people's birthdays either through a phone call or an SMS. He keeps a list and updates it as he meets new people.

Businesspeople, politicians, students housewives, lonely elderly people, rich or poor, famous or obscure, everyone's heart is the same, and everyone has a need for genuine love. I've been able to witness it personally by observing people's reactions to these birthday wishes.

Two years ago, a lonely widow burst into tears when she received that phone call wishing her a happy birthday, and she has brought up that call on many occasions since. To her it represented a turning point in the difficult process of inner healing after her husband passed

away, and she had to live all alone in a remote area. She said she felt so much love and concern in that unexpected phone call that it brought her heart back to life again.

I'll admit it's not as simple as it seems, as some mornings you wake up wanting to just think about yourself and don't feel like making the effort to cheer up someone else on their birthday. I say this because Paolo's example influenced me, and some time ago I also embraced the "birthday tradition," even though my list is still much smaller than his.

Sometimes I don't feel like making that phone call, but the reaction usually more than repays my effort, and I discover once again that it doesn't take much to bring a little cheer to someone's life.

A few times, I realized that my simple words really made someone's day and that I was possibly the only person who remembered. Or I found out they had just experienced some difficult time in their lives, a loss or a sickness. And when I hung up, all I could say was: "Thank God I made that phone call!"

Truly, it is more blessed to give than to receive. ■

Growth Is Addictive

By Marie Alvero, adapted

I'm sure parents the world over share my dread of wrestling with children's homework and preparing them for tests. Calming my teenagers' anxiety before a test, or trying to get them to eat breakfast before a benchmark exam, are parenting moments I'll be more than happy to be done with.

After many struggling sessions, I've realized that more than prepping them, I need to change our approach to testing. The issue is in our view of scoring and failure. If my kid brings home a 60% score on a test, I'll try to say something like, "That means you understand 60% of the material. What do you think you need to learn next?" We now use the scoring more as a "you are here" marking on a map, not as a determination of success or failure. We try to make growth the goal.

Focusing on growth puts a new spin on making mistakes, asking questions, reworking a problem, and even failure. Growth is exciting and rewarding, and always pursuable and attainable. Even if they haven't fully mastered the material, they can learn one more thing. And progress becomes a lifelong pursuit. I don't want fear of failure to hold them back. I would rather have them try, fail, see where their weaknesses are, strengthen those weaknesses, and try again.

This has led me to find out a lot about myself. I realized that I'd hit my ceiling of growth because I wasn't venturing out of my comfort zone. I was terrified of failure, speaking up only when I was 100% sure I was 100% correct, only attempting things I knew I was proficient in, and generally holding back.

Recognizing that in myself was uncomfortable. When it comes to growth there's no such thing as simply maintaining; you're either going forwards or backwards. And who wants to go backwards? Who wants to be less wise, less healthy, and poorer today than you were yesterday?

Since I've made the choice to grow, I've found endless opportunities—harder workouts, uncomfortable conversations, new recipes, "scarier" investments, applying for promotions at work, signing up for training courses. Oh, and backing into the driveway! Each step of growth has made me want to keep going. ■



Children Learn What They Live

By Dorothy Law Nolte, Ph.D.

If children live with criticism, they learn to condemn.
If children live with hostility, they learn to fight.
If children live with fear, they learn to be apprehensive.
If children live with pity, they learn to feel sorry for themselves.
If children live with ridicule, they learn to feel shy.
If children live with jealousy, they learn to feel envy.
If children live with shame, they learn to feel guilty.
If children live with encouragement, they learn confidence.
If children live with tolerance, they learn patience.
If children live with praise, they learn appreciation.
If children live with acceptance, they learn to love.
If children live with approval, they learn to like themselves.
If children live with recognition, they learn it is good to have a goal.
If children live with sharing, they learn generosity.
If children live with honesty, they learn truthfulness.
If children live with fairness, they learn justice.
If children live with kindness and consideration, they learn respect.
If children live with security, they learn to have faith in themselves and in those about them.
If children live with friendliness, they learn the world is a nice place in which to live. ■



Change Your Tone

PARENTING
FROM THE HEART



By Picklebums

Saying no to our kids is not the end of the world. In fact, sometimes it is just what your child needs to hear. A firm no can have a precise impact at times when you really need it to, but if you are trying to get your child to listen to an explanation, or to change their behavior, then starting your response with a negative can mean you fail before you even begin.

Little kids often don't take in or understand the negative words we use. They miss the *don't* or *stop* at the beginning of the sentence, and can't figure out why you are telling them to do the thing they are already doing when you appear angry about it. It's confusing for them and frustrating for us!

Older kids often tune out when they hear a negative. Starting with a don't can mean they begin to argue before you have even finished the sentence as

they assume whatever comes next is not something they will like. It puts them on the defensive right from the start and is a quick way to set up a power struggle that you'd probably rather avoid.

Simply changing the tone and wording from the negative to the positive can make a big difference in whether your kids listen and cooperate. Focusing on positive language with kids can turn a battle into a space for collaboration.

How do you change your tone from positive to negative?

Your Words.

Start by thinking about what you are saying. Can you get your message across without using any negative language?

I've found the best place to start is to stop telling my kids what they can't do and start telling them what they can do.

“Please walk inside.”

“Take the ball outside.”

“Be gentle with your brother.”

Another easy change is to start by saying something that connects with my kids in a positive way. It might be noticing what they are doing from their perspective, or trying to put their feelings into words, or sharing your love for them, before you redirect. This small connection shows my kids that I notice them and care about them and their feelings, before I notice and redirect their behavior.

“It looks like you two are having loads of fun...”

“It looks like you are angry with your sister...”

“I love that you are excited about going...”

Sometimes, if I put those two things together, I can avoid any negatives at all.

“It looks like you two are having loads of fun. Take the ball outside where you have lots of space to throw it.”

Sometimes I am stressed, or rushed, or overwhelmed, and can't think of a positive way to say all I need to say, but if I can just start with a positive I'll get a much better response, and with a little practice positive language will slowly become more habit than effort.

Your Tone.

It's not just what you say, but also how you say it. The other side to this idea is your tone.

Tell me I'm not alone in this...

I say to my kids in my best whiny voice, “Stop whining and complaining all the time! It's doing my head in!”

Yep, I whine at my kids to stop

whining, or I yell at my kids to stop yelling... because that is definitely going to make things better—or not.

I cannot expect my children to stop whining, or yelling, or arguing, if I am doing those things too!

I need to be a role model when it comes to the way we speak to each other. I need to set the tone and respond in a calm, polite, and positive manner. I need to show my kids that it is important to master your tone, and that it is worth the effort.

Sometimes I find this so very hard.

It's always there in the back of my mind, but it often slips away right when I need to remember it. But when I make a real effort to focus on watching my tone and the way I am speaking to people, especially my children, they pick up on it, and suddenly life in our house seems so much calmer and nicer.

I am not trying to erase all negative tone and language from my interactions with my kids, that would be weird and unnatural, but I am trying to make the majority of my interactions with them positive, especially when I am guiding their behavior. And I am trying to be aware of my tone and language, how it affects my family, and how I can do better.

You catch more flies with honey than vinegar, so the saying goes, and it is very true when it comes to parenting our kids. Everyone likes to be spoken to in a nice way. You'll get more cooperation and collaboration if you change your tone and words from the negative to the positive.

This is what I am working on right now, to be a more connected and kinder parent. What are you working on? ■

10 Ways to Encourage Someone Else Today

Web Reprint, adapted



Who wouldn't like a little more encouragement? It's easy to encourage someone else! To encourage means "to put courage into." How do you do that? How do you put courage into another person?

It helps to start by considering the ways you have been encouraged by others. Contemplate what has emboldened you, and then you will have some specific ideas about how to encourage those around you.

Here are 10 starter ideas so that you can begin encouraging others right away.

1. Validate what someone has said or done. Putting validation into words is not always easy, but even a simple thumbs up, or a "like" on a Facebook post is validating to others.

2. Smile. Your smile conveys warmth and acceptance. When we accept others we communicate that we think they are okay. That simple unspoken acceptance is encouraging.

3. Offer a listening ear. One of the greatest ways we can encourage others is by simply listening to what's on their mind or what's in their heart.

4. Offer a compliment or a word of praise. Be sure it's not superficial or a small talk nicety. Make it authentic and specific.

5. Notice that someone has made a difference. Connect the dots between what they did and what difference it made. By doing so, you will be adding purpose and meaning that is encouraging.

6. Appreciate what others have done. Express your gratitude, and don't assume others know it. You can't say "thank you" too often.

7. Give others the latitude to try new things. Part of encouraging others means boosting their confidence. By trusting others with new endeavors, you are demonstrating your confidence and building theirs. That's powerful encouragement!

8. Show an interest in what others are doing. Be curious and step outside your own comfort zone into someone else's. It is tremendously encouraging to know that others genuinely are interested in what you were doing.

9. Set and communicate your expectations. Be clear about what you expect. Let others surprise you as they arise to your expectations.

10. Encourage others by acknowledging the efforts they have made. Don't wait around for the end result. Encourage those efforts along the way if you'd like to see more of them.

Why is it a good idea to encourage others? Well, there are plenty of reasons, but here's one: it will make you feel encouraged, too.

That's right. When you encourage others, you will get an extra measure of courage that uplifts your spirit, too. Encouragement is contagious, and you can be the carrier. ■

Encouragement

NOTABLE
QUOTES



Words are singularly the most powerful force available to humanity. We can choose to use this force constructively with words of encouragement, or destructively using words of despair. Words have energy and power with the ability to help, to heal, to hinder, to hurt, to harm, to humiliate and to humble.

—**Yehuda Berg**

A word of encouragement from a teacher to a child can change a life. A word of encouragement from a spouse can save a marriage. A word of encouragement from a leader can inspire a person to reach her potential.—**John C. Maxwell**

When you encourage others, you in the process are encouraged because you're making a commitment and difference in that person's life. Encouragement really does make a difference.—**Zig Ziglar**

Friendly people are caring people, eager to provide encouragement and support when needed most.—**Rosabeth Moss Kanter**

Awards can give you a tremendous amount of encouragement to keep getting better, no matter how young or old you are.—**Alan Alda**

Most of us, swimming against the tides of trouble the world knows nothing about, need only a bit of praise or encouragement—and we will make the goal.—**Robert Collier**

We can all remember a time when someone encouraged us and made a difference in our lives. It may be just a moment, but this encouragement could last a lifetime.—**Megan Shull**

It's amazing what a little encouragement can do.—**Winnie Harlo**

A word of encouragement during a failure is worth more than an hour of praise after success.—**Unknown**

It is time for us all to stand and cheer for the doer, the achiever—the one who recognizes the challenges and does something about it.—**Vince Lombardi**