

Encouraging children to support each other in their learning:

The Art of Positive Criticism

"Criticism, like rain, should be gentle enough to nourish a person's growth without destroying their roots."--Frank Clark

The self concept each child develops is dependent on the quality of their experiences and interactions with others. If children enjoy successful supportive experiences and believe that they are valued as individuals, they will develop a positive self image. Their self esteem will increase, and they will be more willing to take risks with their learning as their confidence grows.

If they live with constant failure and confusion they develop negative self images, and their self esteem plummets. To a child living with a negative self image many new experiences will appear threatening, and they are likely to sink into a pattern of failure and apathy reinforced by negative self talk.

Children at Key Stage 2 should be given opportunities to practise the art of Positive Criticism as part of their learning experience.

Encourage the right motivation:

Research indicates that praise to criticism in the ratio 4:1 will develop a positive attitude to learning. Children should feel confident in their ability, and encouraged in the knowledge that they know how to make their work even better.

Help children to use PCFP: Praise-Constructive Feedback-Praise.

The brain remembers beginnings best, followed by endings, and will remember the part in the middle if it is relevant or important to them.

Guide them towards being specific in their criticism.

Ask the children to quote or specify the exact word or particular that they liked, or thought could be improved.

Encourage moderate language.

Remind them to avoid exaggerated language like "always" and "never".

They need to watch the adjectives they use to describe the work/thinking they are criticising.

Remind them of the importance of body language

Encourage them to maintain good eye contact. If they are not being honest and don't mean what they are saying, their tone of voice and body language may give them away.

Through modelling, help them to offer a solution when offering criticism.

Even if someone is willing to change, they may have no idea where to start or lack the confidence to pursue a different solution.

Don't let the children assume that someone "will get the gist" if they just hint, or make a vague comment.

Promote dialogue.

Encourage the children to ask their friend for their opinion about the criticism they have given. Did they fully understand the suggestions that were given?

Encourage them to find out whether there are any obstacles which might prohibit the person from following their recommendations.

On understanding the special circumstances they may recommend a different course of action.

P

Encourage with **praise**

C

Constructive

F

Feedback

P

Praise

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