There is little doubt that the most powerful confidence boosting skill that a parent has is the ability to encourage children. Encouragement focuses on the process of what children do rather than on the results of their activity. Encouraging parents focus on their children’s efforts, improvement and contributions they make. Encouraging parents also display confidence in children’s ability to be independent and tackle most of the challenges and opportunities that come their way.

As significant adults in their lives parents are in an excellent position to develop a real sense of self-confidence in their children. Encouragement is not a one-act play. It is not use saying, “I tried that encouragement caper and it didn’t work. My child still lacks confidence.” Encouragement is a continual process that begins with attitude and shows itself through the language we use with children and also the way we treat them.

HERE ARE SIX ENCOURAGEMENT STRATEGIES YOU CAN USE WITH CHILDREN OF ALL AGES TO PROMOTE A SENSE OF CONFIDENCE AND SELF-ESTEEM:

1. **Give children realistic responsibility.** Through our actions we are giving them the message: ‘I know that you can do this’. Developing self-helps skills and giving children real responsibility for the little things of life such as getting themselves out of bed when they are old enough to use an alarm clock demonstrate that you faith in them.

2. **Point out children’s strengths and achievements.** When correcting a child or pointing out an error focus on a strength first. ‘I like the way that you write your letters. Now let’s concentrate on spacing your words out a little more’.

3. **Recognise improvement they have made or effort they are putting in at school or at home.** ‘Your reading has really come along…’ You can’t always praise their performance but you can usually make positive comments about their improvement, effort or attitude.

4. **Express your confidence and faith in their abilities.** Every child needs someone in their life who says I know you can do this. That person is generally a parent so be prepared to be a cheerleader for your child.

5. **Promote positive self-talk.** When children do something well ask them how they feel about their efforts. ‘That’s a terrific drawing, Sarah. What do you think about it?’ Encourage them to make positive comments about themselves and discourage them from putting themselves down.

6. **If you need a reminder to encourage your child consciously develop the habit of offering a positive remark when they leave for school in the morning and when you say good night at bedtime.**

BE MINDFUL OF THESE THREE DISCOURAGING METHODS AND REMOVE THEM FROM YOUR LIST OF PARENTING STRATEGIES:

1. **Compare children to a sibling or friend:** ‘Why can’t you keep your bedroom tidy like your sister?’

2. **Continually criticising or putting them down:** ‘You are a real dope!’

3. **Focusing on their mistakes and errors:** ‘Oh no! You’ve made a mistake again. How many times do I have to remind you?’