



The Difference Between Self-Esteem And Self Righteousness

Welcome to the jungle. The quest is to raise a kid that has a good sense of self. You've been told that praise is the key but be careful because what you haven't been told is that this key can also open the door to a pack of troubles if praise is the only thing you do!

Praise, like any tool for raising kids, can be used inappropriately. Praise tends to imply attaching a value to a child for demonstrating particular behaviour. However, children are valuable and should be loved for the mere fact that they exist. Even though there is a connection, there is also a difference between valuing children and facilitating appropriate behaviour. While it is true that children who are valued tend to behave and perform better, children who are only praised and whose misbehaviours are not dealt with, tend to believe everything they do is all right and that the world revolves around them. This in turn leads to the development of self-righteousness.

Self-righteousness can best be described as an attitude about oneself. It is characterized by a feeling of being important to the exclusion of anyone else, so that what the child wants or feels or does, counts for everything above anyone else. Kids with this kind of attitude tend to be bossy, telling others what to do, or loners because no

one else can measure up. While valuing a child is absolutely important for the development of a healthy sense of self, praise without direction, feedback and consequences, turns out to be a prescription for a self-righteous attitude.

Rather than self-righteousness, self-esteem is the true prize to be sought in terms of a child's healthy sense of self. Self-esteem is relational. With self-esteem the child not only feels good about his or herself individually, but also in relation to others. Self-righteousness is egocentric while self-esteem is social.

Children with healthy self-esteem understand and respond to limits. They feel good about themselves at no one else's expense. These children tend to be kind and considerate.

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Gary Direnfeld is a child-behaviour expert, a social worker, and the author of *Raising Kids Without Raising Cane*. Gary not only helps people get along or feel better about themselves, but also enjoys an extensive career in public speaking. He provides insight on issues ranging from child behaviour management and development; to family life; to socially responsible business development. Courts in Ontario, Canada consider Gary an expert on matters pertaining to child development, custody and access, family/marital therapy and social work.

Buy the book:

To order Direnfeld's book, *Raising Kids Without Raising Cane*, send a cheque or money order in the amount of \$12.00 to:

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