Encouragement, Not Just Praise

It may sound strange to consider not always praising our children. However, constant praise that implies everything is always “great, wonderful, fantastic and good” sometimes becomes a bit overdone.

Using encouraging phrases often helps children to keep trying even when things aren’t “great”. It also acknowledges that the effort, the attempt, the act of having a go and working on something is worthy of acknowledgment, even if it doesn’t always work out.

Encouragement helps build resilience and self-esteem and models for children that it is productive and constructive to have a go - even if you don’t always achieve the intended outcome. Praise and encouragement are both lovely for children but encouragement is often underdone and praise is often overdone.

Finding the balance is the key!

Some examples of encouraging phrases and comments:

• I can see you have tried hard with that today.
• I like the way you had a go.
• I can see you have had to try really hard with that.
• I like the way you kept trying.
• I wonder if there is another way you could try to make that work.
• I enjoyed playing together with you today.
• I know you are finding this hard. Perhaps there is another way...
• How do you feel you went with that today?
• Could we do this bit together to keep you going?
• Can you think of another way to do this?
• I love the effort you have put into this today.
• You have worked really hard and tried really well with this today.
• I know it isn’t quite how you thought it would be, but you really persisted and tried hard.
• I like the way you have picked up your things and packed away today.
• I appreciate you collecting the mail. Thanks.
• I like it when we read together and you have a go at the words.
• I thought we all worked well together today as a family.
• We might have to try and problem-solve this so we can work it out.
• Would you like to tell me about this today and how it went?
• I know you are finding this frustrating. How else might you try or what else can you do?
• I would like you to have a go at this and I will help if you are stuck.
• I would like you to try before I help you. I think you will be able to make a start.
• I like the ideas you have. Can you think of an idea now that might help?