

How is your brain wired for acknowledgment?

Category – Personal/Family Wellness

Beyond the necessary food, water, sleep, fresh air and movement, there is another key component to our growth that can make or break how we see ourselves and how we relate to the world. It's called acknowledgement.

Being acknowledged for the person we are, the actions we take and the milestones we achieve is essential to our wellbeing. It validates our worth and motivates us to grow and take further action.

In many instances however, most people do not presently feel seen or celebrated for their personal or professional efforts, nor did they feel validated as a youngster.

What kind of feedback did you receive when you were a child? Do you remember how it felt, what it meant to you? How did it impact your choices then, and now as an adult?

Many adults today were raised by well intentioned parents, however praise was likely withheld, as tough love was more common place. It was also thought that children should be seen and not heard, and they were born to please their parents.

The negative is that those who may not have received much praise, likely missed receiving the acknowledgment they needed to fully grow into their potential. On the positive side however, these people likely adapted to the lack, don't look for acknowledgement as an adult and are therefore more likely to take action because they are not waiting for outer validation to motivate them.

Interestingly in contrast, ***a current trend today is for parents to over praise their children!*** They do this in the hopes of giving them a sense of confidence so they will not be intimidated by life challenges. This may also be a response to the neglect or the scarce amount of feedback they received as a child, so they are now overcompensating with their own children.

Great intentions, however the plan doesn't work.

Research has shown there is a problem with this approach. If there is too much praise or if it isn't sincere or specific, the plan ultimately backfires and children are not properly grounded in who they are, what their true skills are, what to work on, and ultimately will grow to expect continual praise for everything they do. This does not breed solid life skills, as the world will not cater in this way.

Each person and child has things they are naturally good at and thing they aren't. **Healthy cognitive and emotional development needs the brain and body connection to learn that we don't have to be the best at everything, and frustration spells can be worked through.** If a child grows up getting too frequent rewards, they will likely not have persistence, follow through or they may quit when the rewards disappear.

Excessive praise distorts a child's motivation as they begin doing things merely to hear the praise, losing sight of the intrinsic joy of moving, participating, exploring and learning. Kids sense their parents' expectations and this increases the pressure on them to excel. They become more focused on outcomes, rather than the learning curve.

You can miss out on a lot of the many joys of life if you are always working towards the "next" outcome vs. being present during the learning curve. Learning curves are not always academic; they are also about generally navigating our life experiences with more body awareness, emotional presence, and intuition.

It takes skills like noticing, appropriate learning rhythms, and tools like Brain Gym integrated movements – which connects the neruo networks of the brain that support actually tuning into where you or your child is at and then sharing authentic feedback.

Rather than just saying, 'great job' or 'you are amazing', it's far better to say something like, "I like the way you took the time to organize your space before putting the puzzle together" or, "I noticed that you were being a really good friend on the playground by sharing your toys."

Specific feedback takes time to notice and time to deliver. The stressed parent will have difficulty doing this seemingly simple task. It is important however to a child's development that what they are actually doing gets acknowledged for what it is, not always blanket statements that are not even accurate.

Ultimately getting people out of stress so they can authentically notice and praise their child's, spouses, or employee's skills and progress is pivotal to their development and the quality of the relationship. As well, tools like **cognitive/brain fitness** that everyone can use to support one's learning curve when they feel stuck or lack confidence is fodder for their own empowerment!

Jill Hewlett and Sharon Todd are co-founders of Brain Works Global Inc., licensed Brain Gym® Trainers and Cognitive Fitness Experts. Their company trains clients on how to maximize their learning potential while working in conjunction with their individual goals.

For over a decade [Jill Hewlett](#) has been providing inspirational and educational [keynotes](#), as well, Brain Works provides [in house](#) and [community training](#) and personal and professional coaching services to a wide range of [organizations](#), [schools](#) and the [community](#). For more information go to <http://www.brainworksglobal.com> or call Sharon Todd, Director of Sales and Operations 905.830.6902.



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