

12 Kids Symptoms You Should Never Ignore

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# Parents

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they overhear more than things that are told to them," says Dr. Karp.

**CANNED** "Terrific job selling all those Girl Scout Cookies!"

**CREDIBLE** "It was smart to smile and look customers in the eye when you asked them to buy the cookies."

Specific praise seems more legit to kids than a blanket statement. "Plus it helps a kid understand what she did right and what future strategies would be useful," says Dr. Corpus. Dana Kramer uses this tactic during Scrabble games with her son Andrew, 8. "I'll say things like, 'That was clever how you put the "J" down on the Triple Letter Score in the middle of two Double Word Scores,'" she notes.

**CANNED** "It's so exciting that you won a ribbon at the science fair."

**CREDIBLE** "Hmmm. Would you like to tell me about this ribbon?"

Instead of reacting right away, allow your child to evaluate and appreciate his own

work; it lays the foundation for building self-esteem. "When you rush in with praise, it can derail your child's introspection," says Brad Sachs, Ph.D., family therapist in Columbia, Maryland, and author of *The Good Enough Child: How to Have an Imperfect Family and Be Perfectly Satisfied*. What's more, Dr. Sachs says being quick to praise may create anxiety in a child because he feels that he always has to perform at a high level. Instead, offer praise after your child has a chance to explain his accomplishment.

**CANNED** "I'm incredibly proud of your school book report."

**CREDIBLE** "You must be so proud of your school book report."

While your opinion still matters to your child, she's developing her own sense of accomplishment. During this phase, turn the tables with your praise. Explains Dr. Corpus: "You'll be supporting her emerging autonomy and helping her feel responsible for her achievements." □

# Q & A

My 7-year-old son's best friend is a girl, and they want

to have a sleepover. Should I allow him to go to her house?

While it's unusual for boys and girls to be best friends at this age, there's no reason to discourage their relationship. Since many grade-schoolers are curious about the differences between the sexes, a coed overnight can be tricky, says Russell Hyken, Ph.D., a psychotherapist in St. Louis. However, if you and his friend's parents are comfortable, it's fine to proceed but establish firm ground rules: Designate a private area for changing, arrange a separate bed or mattress for each child, and leave the door open at all times. And check in on the kids until they're both asleep.

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