



SACRED HEART CATHOLIC SCHOOL

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Week at a Glance for Families

February 8, 2016

Dear Families,

You can also find this Week at a Glance for Families and all previous WAAGS and Newsletters on the school website at <http://www.st-clair.net/SHS/news.aspx> and on our school TWITTER site: @shs49ers. Thanks!

Monday, February 8

- Liturgy today at 12:20pm followed by a visit by some of the Sarnia Sting players
- Senior Girls Basketball practice – lunch hour
- **Senior Girls Basketball HOME** game vs. Gregory Hogan at 3:15pm

Tuesday, February 9

- Senior Boys Basketball practice – lunch hour
- GODSPELL rehearsal at lunch hour
- SHROVE TUESDAY

Wednesday, February 10

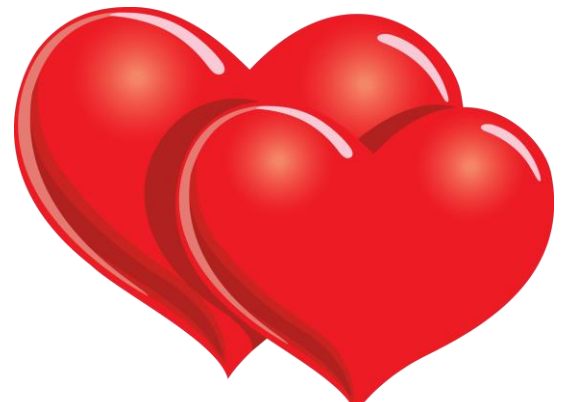
- ASH WEDNESDAY – students will be attending the parish service at the church at 12:45pm
- Senior Boys Basketball practice – lunch hour
- **Senior Boys Basketball AWAY** game vs. St. Francois at 3:15pm
- GODSPELL rehearsal at lunch hour

Thursday, February 11

- POPCORN day

Friday, February 12

- **RED and WHITE** day
- Senior Girls Basketball practice – lunch hour
- POPCORN day
- GODSPELL rehearsal at lunch hour



Reminder: Monday, February 15th is Family Day

*Attachments: **Build Confidence in Your Child***

Have a great VALENTINE's weekend!

Happy Valentines Day

Build Confidence in Your Child

Find the words that will make your child's spirit soar.

By [Abby Margolis Newman](#)

Ask any parent what she wants most for her child, and the answer you are almost guaranteed to get is, "I want my child to be happy." A big part of happiness is self-confidence — after all, we want our kids to feel good about themselves, right? But sometimes, our attempts at building confidence in our kids, while well-intentioned, can do more harm than good, as Sylvia Jackson recently learned.

When Jackson's 11-year-old son, David, brought home a bad grade on a spelling test — one he clearly hadn't studied for — Jackson's sympathies were strained. After she told him it was clear he hadn't devoted the time needed to prepare for the test, David's response was, "I stink at everything!"

Jackson, realizing she may not have picked the right moment to criticize David's study habits, tried to backtrack. She talked about the progress he had been making in school in other subjects — "It doesn't matter!" was David's response — about what a great reader he had become — "Who cares!" — and his success as catcher for his Little League team — "I can't hit!"

"He left for school feeling crummy," Jackson laments, "and I left for work feeling the same way." Seemingly, her attempts at making David feel better — at re-building his confidence — completely backfired, and she was flummoxed. Yet, this happens to so many of us. What are we doing wrong, and how can we truly help our children at times like this?

"What Sylvia said to her son wasn't helpful, but it's not the end of the world," says Adele Faber, co-author (with Elaine Mazlish) of *How to Talk So Kids Will Listen & Listen So Kids Will Talk*. "She can always go back to him later and say, 'I've been thinking about the spelling test you showed me yesterday. Seeing that grade on your paper must have been a big disappointment.'" The main idea to keep in mind, according to Faber, is that when children are upset, parents need to start the conversation by acknowledging their kids' feelings. The minute we begin with criticism or advice, they shut us down, shut us out or, like David, become increasingly upset and finally conclude, "I stink at everything."

Here's how Jackson's situation could have gone differently, using three specific Faber-Mazlish tested techniques:

1. **Accept your child's feelings**

Mom (after David hands her spelling test): Hmm. That must have been really disappointing.

David: Yeah.

Mom: Well, I see you got "accommodate" right, that's a hard word. But no wonder you had trouble with "column," it has a silent 'n.' Gee, spelling can be hard. How do you get tricky words like that to stick in your head?

David: I don't know. Maybe you can test me. Or I can spell them out loud?

Says Faber: "By accepting the misery of David's feelings and acknowledging the difficulty of the challenge he faces, Mom has freed David to think about what concrete steps he might take to improve his spelling. Now he no longer sees himself as a failure, but as someone who is capable of solving his own problem."

2. **Conjure a dream**

Mom: Spelling can be really frustrating! Don't you wish we could just invent our own way of spelling words?

David: Yeah! Then no matter how we spelled the word, it would be right!

Mom: Or wouldn't it be fun to have a little spell-check chip inserted into our brain?

David: Then we'd never have to worry about studying!

"The more far-out, the better," says Faber. "Giving a child what he'd like in fantasy is not only deeply comforting, it can help him to deal better with reality."

3. **Remind him of how he succeeded in the past**

Mom: Well, the one thing I've noticed about you is that when you decide to learn something, you don't quit until you really know it. I remember how you studied for your last math test. You wrote out your multiplication tables over and over; you practiced them out loud; and you even got your brother to test you on them. All that work and repetition just drummed those numbers into your head, and it really paid off.

"The message to David," says Faber, "is that he's not helpless. With work, he has the power within him to master a difficult subject. He's done it before; he can do it again."



The Problem with Praise

As much as Faber and Mazlish's *How to Talk* books have become bibles in many homes there has been another author, Carol S. Dweck, whose research, on how parents may unknowingly undermine their children's success, has been garnering a lot of attention lately. An article on the topic which appeared in the spring of 2007 in *New York magazine*, "[How Not to Talk to Your Kids](#)," flew around the Internet like wildfire. (I personally had it sent to me by three different people.)

Dweck is a professor of psychology at Stanford University whose book, *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success*, maintains that although parents and teachers have long believed they could build kids' confidence by praising their abilities, in actuality the opposite is true. Echoing Jackson's experience with David, Dweck says, "For everything you tell them they're good at, they can tell you something they're not good at."

Over and over, her research shows the dangers of praising kids' intelligence or ability. She found that when intelligence is praised, "kids immediately stop wanting to learn, because learning involves the possibility of making mistakes and losing their title of 'smart.' So the very thing that was designed to build confidence actually undermines it as soon as they hit anything difficult."

The key, according to Dweck, is **praising effort or process rather than intelligence or ability**. "If you praise the effort, the strategy a child used, the perseverance, the improvement — these things focus on what the child actually did. These are things the child can do again in the face of difficulty. You're teaching the child what brought success in the first place, and what to do again if she stumbles," she says.

Dweck's research involving students in a dozen New York schools showed that when children were praised for their effort, it created a tremendous desire to learn, and that when they were given difficult tasks, they remained absorbed. "They understood that because something was difficult didn't mean they lacked ability or weren't 'smart,' it was just a part of learning," she says.

When I read about Dweck's research, my first thought was, "It's too late. I've ruined my children." My boys are 13, 12, and 8, and I've complimented them all countless times on how "smart" they are. Because, well, they are kind of smart. But I noticed last year, when my middle son, Aaron, started 6th grade, a bit of . . . what shall we call it? Less than stellar input on his homework? A bit of slacking off? A desire to get everything done in record time with minimal effort?

I began to realize two things were at play: First, the work in 6th grade was significantly harder (and heavier in volume) than in 5th. And second, Aaron was comparing himself to his older brother, Jonah, a year ahead of him in middle school. Jonah is a quintessential oldest child: perfectionistic, anal-retentive, hyperorganized. He also happens to be a 4.0 student. Aaron took one look at his homework and his "perfect student" brother, and his response was, "Why even try?"

Now, Aaron is creative, passionate, funny (his Grandpa Simpson imitation is the best I've heard), verbally sophisticated, and (yes, I'll say it) smart, but still feels academically intimidated by his brother and the new workload. How to keep his confidence up? Faber, also co-author of *Siblings Without Rivalry*, knows something about this topic. She says parents should emphasize the individual styles of siblings with great appreciation for each one. "The parent must work to beam an equally bright light onto each child," she says. "This will help the child not see himself in reference to his sibling."

Dweck says that for children like Aaron, who have coasted along in elementary school being told how bright they are, [underachieving](#) in middle school is common. "When things get hard, they think, 'Effort is for those not as smart as I am.' They'd rather opt out and keep their reputation for brilliance intact than to take risks and possibly fail," she explains. When parents try to get these kids to work harder by reassuring them how smart they are, it just exacerbates the problem. "Rather than building confidence, this contributes to the child feeling even more intimidated," Dweck points out.

Instead of "You're so smart!" Dweck recommends saying something like, "You really studied for that test and it paid off!" Instead of "You're so talented," try "I really like the way you worked on that piano piece — it sounds better and better!" Instead of "What a great artist you are!" you can say, "Tell me about the colors you chose for this drawing." When children's effort or strategy is praised, it creates not only confidence in themselves and their own resourcefulness, but a *desire to learn*.

In thinking about Faber's and Dweck's descriptions of true confidence-building actions parents can take as opposed to superficial ones which may backfire, I envision two children standing side by side. One has bright yellow post-its sticking out from all over her body, and on each one is written things like "You're so smart!" "You're an amazing athlete!" "You're a fantastic artist!" "You're brilliant in school!" The other child, while completely devoid of post-its, sports a beatific smile, conveying the inner confidence oozing from every pore.

Yes, we want our children to be happy and confident. But that confidence must grow from the inside to be real and resilient — if we try to confer confidence through praise (like so many stuck-on post-it notes) our kids will be on shaky ground whenever challenges arise. "Rather than trying to hand confidence to your kids on a silver platter," says Dweck, "when you praise process, you are giving them the tools they need to maintain their own confidence in the future."