

Ep #95 Video games addiction and meeting kids' emotional needs with Effective Praise: Part 1

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This is episode 95. Part one, Effective Praise.

We welcome you to the ADHD Smarter Parenting podcast. Here to heal and elevate lives is your parenting coach Siope Kinikini.

Hello, my friends. How are you? I hope you're doing well. I hope you're staying safe. I am doing well and I am staying safe where I'm at. And today I am excited to talk about this topic because this is a consistent question that I have been receiving over the last couple of weeks from parents with teenagers, specifically because of the situation that we're in and because children are at home more. [And so we're going to be talking about Effective Praise as a skill. We're going to be talking about how it's so powerful and specifically what it does for children.](#) The psychology behind Effective Praise.

Effective Praise helps to build trust. It helps to build confidence in children. It confirms mastery of an action in children. It gives them autonomy and helps encourage autonomy for your children. So we're going to be talking about the positive parts of Effective Praise.

Now at the same time is understanding that Effective Praise is being used in negative ways. So the way I want you to think about it is if we were watching Star Wars, we see Luke Skywalker, who's our hero. And then we have Darth Vader who is the villain or the enemy, right? Well, you as a parent are Luke Skywalker and you're using Effective Praise and all the wonderful ways that it needs to be used in order to help our hero become successful. Well, there is another side where the psychology behind Effective Praise is being used in ways to manipulate your children. We're going to talk a little bit about that because I'm answering the very specific question of children who are struggling with video game addiction and they're being stuck in this mindset of playing video games all the time.

I've had this question pop up more frequently over the last couple of weeks than I have had in a long time. [And it's consistently the idea that my child is playing a lot of video games and not doing what they need to do in the real world.](#) They're stuck in the virtual world, but not in the real world. So we're going to talk about the positives of Effective Praise, the ways that you can use

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it, and the ways that you can actually help your child if they are not following through with the expectations in the home. And then to meet those areas where you're building trust. You're building confidence. You're confirming mastery of an action. You're actually encouraging autonomy on their part.

I'm going to do this by sharing the story of Bill and Karen and their son Jeremy, who's 14 years old. I received a call from Karen and Karen was concerned about her son Jeremy. Jeremy during this time has resorted to isolating himself and playing video games. And it has gotten to the point in their home where he didn't want to do anything other than play video games. And by removing the video games, he became more irate and more upset and he started to argue with his parents consistently about everything.

So, Karen reached out and just wanted some guidance and some help on things that she could do in order to help him comply with their expectations and do well. We talked quite a bit, Karen and I, about things that she could do and strategize. [But one of the things that I definitely wanted her to do was to use the skill of Effective Praise.](#) And I wanted her to be very specific and very intentional in using Effective Praise consistently throughout the day in whatever interaction she had with Jeremy.

So, in order to really understand this, we had to talk about the psychology of Effective Praise. In developing children, the things that they are yearning for and that they need are to build trust. They need to feel trust. They are trying to build confidence in themselves, okay? They need to feel like they can master something. They need to also feel like they are autonomous and they can do it on their own.

Now, as a child is very young, as they develop, these things actually grow. The idea of building trust. Building self-confidence in their own skills. Confirming that they can master something well. And then being able to do it on their own are super important for kids, especially as teenagers. And that's why you'll find a lot of teenagers will rebel against their parents because they're trying to meet one of those very specific psychological needs.

A paper was done in 2010 that evaluated video game engagement and the motivational model of video game engagement. In fact, that's the name of the paper: [A Motivational Model of Video Game of Engagement.](#) And I will leave a link in the notes for this episode so you can take a look at it. What they determined in that study was that video games actually focus in on meeting those needs psychologically in the video gameplay. Video games are structured to build trust. They are structured to build confidence in children who are playing video games. They also help to confirm mastery of an action or mastery of a level. And it's autonomous because you are in charge of the character that you're playing or in charge of how things play out in the video game.

So in their evaluation of this, we see that psychologically they are finding ways to meet these needs through a screen and these fancy pictures and sound effects and rewards. If you think of

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any video game that you have played or that your child has played, you'll find that there is a certain amount of mastery that's required and your child is always seeking to get to the next level. And video game creators always create additional levels. And so it goes extremely deep in there. And this, as they accomplish a level, they start to build confidence and trust in themselves and they feel like I've done it all on my own.

So when I was talking to Karen, I said, "Karen, okay. So the psychology behind what your child needs is being met through the video game. So we need to counter that. And to counter that we are going to be using Effective Praise in real life because the virtual world is giving him this sense of, 'Hey, I am developing and growing, but virtual worlds are not real. It's not the real world and he won't be successful in socializing with other people in real life unless he learns those skills in real life.'" So with Karen, I gave her the assignment that she was going to praise her child.

[Now, I need to go over the steps of Effective Praise with you, because I think it's important for you to keep these in mind.](#) The first step is to show approval and find a positive in the behavior that you've noticed. Second is to describe the positive behavior that you've observed. The third is to give a meaningful reason of why that behavior should be done again. And then the fourth step is a reward and that part is optional. So it's actually a very simple, simple skill.

But if you notice in the steps, these answer all of those needs, those psychological needs that children need in order to develop into well-formed adults. It helps to build trust. It helps to build confidence. It helps to confirm mastery of something that they did and autonomy because you're praising them specifically for something that they've done. And so instead of a video game giving them fake coins for something they've accomplished, it's parents giving them rewards or giving them praise, Effective Praise, for the positive behaviors that they've done in real life.

[We Role-played this.](#) I Role-played this with Karen on things that she could praise her son for. And we started with very small things. If you notice with video games, they will do very small, easy tasks on the first couple of levels. And they do that intentionally and that's to get buy-in and to get the sense of, "Hey, I'm getting some of my needs met by doing these simple tasks," and then it becomes harder. You will never find a video game that starts off on the top level of difficulty. It always starts off super simple. And you'll find that in order to keep your child engaged, they have to consistently receive rewards from the game. So with Karen, we were going to do this. We were going to give her an idea of things that she could praise for the positive behavior she exhibited in her son.

So we focused in on what she knew her son could do and what she knew he would do. We started off there and we broke them down into smaller pieces of things that she could praise him for. Now, you're probably wondering, "Well, I'll just praise him once for a behavior." No. When you're starting off in this, and you're dealing with this type of competition between getting reinforcement from a video game and in real life, you want to actually start off at that main level and start praising. You want to praise quite a bit throughout the day. You want to be consistent

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about it, and you want to follow all of those steps. You want to show approval. Find a positive about that. You want to describe the positive behavior. You want to give them a meaningful reason of why that behavior should continue and then possibly give a reward.

So with Karen, we were going to focus on four or five throughout the day that she could do with her son for behaviors that he had. And so it would be things like making his bed, you know, brushing his teeth. Things that most people would be like, "I'm not going to praise my child for that." No, we absolutely want to praise them for that. We want to praise them so they get used to this idea of, "Hey, I'm noticing the good that you're doing. I'm showing that I have confidence in you and you have the confidence to do those things. I'm showing you that you have the mastery over that. And that's something that you're doing on your own building, that autonomy, and building trust." Again, we're meeting all of those needs, all of those needs.

So we started off with Karen. Karen did it for a week and she noticed that her relationship with Jeremy changed. It absolutely changed to where he started to do things that she was asking him to do without throwing too much of a fit or complaining. Now he would occasionally be upset because it was in the middle of a game. However, he didn't respond the way he normally responded to her.

The next week, I asked Karen to add a touch to this. So just a hand on the shoulder while she's praising him. I asked her to be in close proximity, to smile, to do these types of behaviors that were very supportive. What I wanted Karen to do is I wanted her to be able to express Effective Praise, but also through body language. I wanted her to make eye contact, reach out, and give him a positive touch. Being close proximity to him, so he could feel the difference between what he was receiving in the video game, as far as reinforcement, and what he was receiving in real life.

Now at this time, Bill joined in on what we were working on and I started to work with Bill. Now, Bill was raised in a family where they did not praise much. And so teaching him how to praise, it took a while for him to get the idea of this is why we're doing this and this is the psychology behind it and why it's important for you to implement this skill. He started to understand more specifically why. And he definitely wanted a relationship with his son that was better than the yelling and the screaming that they were doing.

We practiced it. I Role-played it with him. We started to Role-play things. And what Bill doesn't know during this whole time is that in my interaction with him during our Zoom sessions, I was praising him. I was using the steps of Effective Praise. And by the end of the very first session that I had with Bill, we had already built a rapport with each other because I was using these skills.

I was using Effective Praise to build trust. To build confidence. And when he did well in our Role-play, I praised him using the steps of Effective Praise so it confirmed mastery of an action. I also praised him in order to emphasize the autonomy that he was able to do it.

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Can you see how Effective Praise answers all of those psychological needs for children and adults. And once we're able to tap into the power of that and understand this is why we're doing this, and this is how we are going to help someone move forward, it really makes a huge difference.

And so Bill was committed to doing this. We chose some very specific things, so he didn't have to think about it on the spot where he could praise his son, Jeremy, throughout the day. Now Bill had a good question and he's like, "What do I do when my son doesn't do what I say and things are so frustrating and I'm so upset?" And I said, "Bill, what we want to do is we want to focus on things that you can praise him for that even though the behavior hasn't turned completely around, there's still some things he's doing that will be positive. So let's say that you go into the room, you ask him to do something and he doesn't do that. What's something positive that he may be doing instead?" And Bill said, "Nothing, because he should be doing what I say."

I said, "Absolutely. He should be doing what you say. However, we're working with him. And we're trying to meet these needs that he has, countering the video games that are giving him a fake sense of accomplishment." And so we came across okay, the idea is, "Well, if he looks at me, that's a good thing to praise, right?" And I said, "Yeah. That's absolutely something. Something as simple as looking at you while you're talking, remaining quiet while you're giving instruction. That's a good thing to praise." We broke it down, even that simple.

So when things didn't work out, I challenged Bill to look, look deeply for anything positive that he could observe that he could praise. And the challenge for Bill was to not let his emotions run with what was happening at the moment but to be very focused in on the moment and things that he could focus on that were positive. We Role-played it, practiced it. And what's great about Zoom meetings is that you can see facial features, which is great because if it was on a phone call, we'd have to describe everything. But we were able to Role-play this and work through a couple of scenarios that he could use.

And we came up with, just like we did with Karen, we came up with very specific situations throughout the day where he could go in and praise. It was this idea of, "Hey, we're going to be praising consistently throughout the day and double-teaming." So Karen would praise him for something positive. Bill would praise him for something positive. And it would just continue on like this throughout the day. And we would do that for a week.

[So when I met with him for the third week, things had drastically changed. Which was amazing. And I give all credit to Bill and Karen for being able to implement this and do this consistently over the course of the time that we planned for the week.](#) Bill was in a better space with his son and actually in a better mood overall. Bill reported that even though his son didn't do everything he asked him to do because he was forced to look at any positives that were happening at the time that he felt better about everything in general. That it helped to alleviate some of his stress and frustration with his son and helped them make a connection.

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Now, by this time, Jeremy was already picking up that something really funky was going on with mom and dad, because they were so positive. And yet at the same time, because they were so positive, Jeremy wanted to be around his parents more and wanted to spend some more time with them and didn't really play as much video game because the video games for him were an escape. They were an escape from his life and from the frustration. And he was feeling like his psychological needs were being met through the video game. And now we were giving him something tangible. A mom who loved him, a dad who loved him. Mom who'd reinforce the positive things that she noticed by mentioning them and she was meeting those needs. She was building trust, building confidence in him. Confirming mastery over something that he did well. Also praising him, which reinforced his autonomy in order to do things.

And the same thing happened to Bill. Bill was able to build trust, build confidence, confirm mastery, and encourage autonomy. At the same time that that was happening, it was happening to both Bill and Karen, too. So not only was Jeremy receiving this positive interaction and realizing that, "Hey, my parents are great and I love them." But Bill and Karen were also receiving it back from Jeremy because Jeremy picked up on it and began to notice good things his parents were doing and he started to comment on that. Which again, feeds into this whole loop of building trust, building confidence, confirming mastery and autonomy. Right? Super, super awesome.

This was one of the most amazing transformations that I noticed with just the skill of Effective Praise. And that goes to speak on just the depth that this skill has in creating rapport and also helping anyone who's struggling with a child to bring them out of that funk and into a different realm. It's a higher level of parenting. This is a level of parenting that is powerful. Super, super powerful. Well because it helps parents realize that their children do good things and their children can do good things when they're able to recognize those things. So super, super great.

Effective Praise is one of those skills that I consistently use with everyone. And in fact, it's something that I invite everyone who learns it to do with each other. Effective Praise opens up communication and it helps people feel comfortable around you. The important part of Effective Praise for me when I am providing Effective Praise is to be sure that it's specific and be sure that I am praising a very specific behavior, and also that I'm sincere about it.

When I was working with Bill and we were talking about implementing effective praise, again, he came from a culture where they just didn't do this. So it took some time for him get used to it. But one of the things that we did with Bill specifically was because we outlined things that he could praise throughout the day, was to be sure that he chose something that he could feel he could be sincere about because children can tell. Children can tell when you're not being sincere. So you definitely want to be sincere about it.

Now we've talked a lot about how Effective Praise is such a powerful tool. And I've also talked about how companies and how video games actually use a form of Effective Praise to engage

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and entice your children. I feel like this is an important part of the conversation, is to understand just how powerful it is. As you work with your children, Effective Praise is going to be one of those skills that you will consistently need to do as your child grows and develops. And it's one that will transform your mindset and your child's mindset.

So just be aware that you can use this for difficult situations in order to bring you and your child out of those difficult situations. Even though we could have used a different skill as well, we could have focused on [Effective Negative Consequences](#). We could have focused on [Effective Positive Rewards](#), [Problem Solving](#). We could have used all these different skills from The Teaching-Family Model to help Jeremy with this gaming addiction, video game addiction that he was struggling with. And yet, when I was speaking to Karen initially, I noticed that she was a person who, this was a skill that was very natural to her and she felt very in tune with it. And so that's why we went with this skill because it was natural and easy for her to do.

And then we brought Bill on board because he started to notice the changes and he wanted in. So we brought Bill and Bill struggled through it a little bit, but we helped Bill through that and helped him become more accustomed to it, which helped him move forward with the skill itself. So we could have tried a lot of different skills. And yet this is the one that we focused on because it was natural to Karen. But also because we were looking at the problem that was happening with Jeremy and we were looking at what were the needs that were being met by him playing the video games. And that's where the discussion went and into what do video games provide your children. And really it's just an adjusted form of Effective Praise.

Effective Praise, I want you to practice it. That's my goal for you, is I want you to practice it today. You do not have to do this with a child, do it with an adult. Do it without them knowing and you're going to find that your relationship and your connection with them is going to improve. Let me go over the steps again so you can do it.

You want to show approval for something that a person has done and you want to find a positive about it. You want to describe the positive behavior and you want to be specific about that behavior. Whatever it may be, you want to be descriptive. Number three is you want to give a meaningful reason for why that behavior should continue. And one of the things that we definitely need to focus on, on giving a meaningful reason, is that reason needs to be important to the person that you're talking to. So not a meaningful reason that's important to you, but a reason that is important to the other person.

For example, with Bill, Karen and Jeremy, when they were praising him for behaviors, describe a positive behavior could be, "Well, you're looking at me while I'm talking to you." Giving a meaningful reason. We had to work with Bill on what's a meaningful reason that's meaningful for Jeremy. Not for you, but as meaningful for Jeremy. And Bill came up with the idea that, "Hey, it's meaningful for him because when he shows respect, I feel more likely to work with him and let him finish his game. And so he can finish his game because he's demonstrated that he can show respect." That was around about way of going through the meaningful reason because

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again, Bill kind of took it back to a reason that was important to him, but then we tied it back into Jeremy earning something from it that he desired or something that he wanted.

And then of course the fourth is a reward and that is contingent upon you, whether or not you feel that is necessary. I know with Bill and Karen, Karen started to give rewards after the first week. And that just helped to increase his positive behaviors with her. And so that's why Bill came on board.

So again, those are the steps and I want you to practice it with somebody. It doesn't have to be a child, you can do it with your spouse or with a coworker, but you want to show approval, find a positive. You want to describe the positive behavior. You want to give a meaningful reason that's meaningful to them and then possibly a reward afterward. And just watch, their eyes will just light up.

Now, I do have to tell you this. [The benefit of calling in for a coaching session is that we can streamline what you need to do in order to help your child just as in this case with Bill and Karen.](#) Bill and Karen could have gone through the Smarter Parenting website and chosen different skills to work through this issue. However, when they called in and we were able to discuss things face-to-face and really look at the nuances of everything that was happening, that's how I knew what skill would be most beneficial. And that's what you get when you call in for coaching.

When you call in for coaching, it really does give you an advantage because we can focus in on your strengths, your child's strengths, and then the areas that will be most impactful for you and your family. So if you haven't signed up for coaching, jump over to the Smarter Parenting and sign up for your first free session with me. And let's talk about ways that we can work together and help your child and help you.

That's it for me for this week and tune in next week, we're going to talk more about Effective Praise and that's part two. That's going to focus a lot on our abilities in our Effective Praise to be sincere and the nuances. Specifically focused on giving a meaningful reason because out of all the steps that one is the hardest for most parents to grasp, is giving a meaningful reason that is important to the child not to the parent. So it's a different mindset and that one does require some thinking through. So join me next week and we will talk about that. Thanks for joining me. Have a great day and stay safe.

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