

## Boys and Praise

By Ian Lillico

Boys and males often react negatively or awkwardly to praise unless it is done carefully. The best type of praise for males (particularly young ones) is called descriptive praise. With **descriptive praise** you describe with appreciation what you feel and what you see; and the boy can then praise himself.

For example: *"I see you have made your bed, tidied your bookcase and cleared the floor – it is a pleasure to walk into your room".*

This type of praise is lasting as phrases like *"well done"* or *"good boy"* are not lasting and can easily be **taken away** on the next occurrence. We tend to give many throw away phrases to boys that are not lasting and have little impact. When you comment on good work completed and describe what they have done with appreciation the skills etc become stored in their bank of skills and attributes and build up their confidence. Furthermore private praise is far more effective these days rather than public praise which often embarrasses young males in particular.

The same applies when visiting colleagues or adults with whom you work. When, for example, you walk into a fellow teacher's class; ask about what they are doing, look at the work and show interest in the topic. This is a very great complement, but phrases like *"great work – keep it up"* are often trite and meaningless. Similarly when your son brings home an essay for which he has received a good mark, read it and ask questions, show an interest in the topic. This again is far better than – *"great result, Sam!"*

We are all busy people and sometimes summing up praiseworthy behaviour in a word is another way to give descriptive praise and add to the set of qualities your son or daughter knows about themselves.

For example: *"You said you'd be home at five o'clock and it is exactly 5 – that's what I call punctuality".*  
*"You noticed the hanging pots were dry and watered them – that's what I call initiative".*

These words – **punctuality** and **initiative** become part of your son or daughter's inbuilt CV which adds to their confidence for the future.

We are quick to criticize and slow to praise. The whole world will tell our kids what's wrong with them – it is our job as parents and teachers to tell them what's right about them and, spending a little more time describing what we see, is a very effective way of making the praise **stick**. Start today!