

# PIP & RIP

*Praise in Public & Remind in Private*

Dr Rob Long

Firstly there are issues with praise. Let's start with the positive side. When a child's behaviour receives attention, then the likelihood of that behaviour occurring again is increased. So with respect to parenting, praise is seen as an important tool and should be given as often as possible and as soon after the behaviour as possible. It should be genuine and targeted with an explanation of the behaviour that is being praised (Cartwright-Hatton, 2010).

However there are dangers with praise. Firstly as children naturally seek approval from adults there is a danger that the child can become addicted to 'pleasing' adults, at any cost. The behaviour of the child is now externally controlled. We see this when a child's behaviour worsens when the rewarding adult is not present. Supply teachers and support staff are well aware of this. What is happening is that the adult is taking responsibility for the child's behaviour and the child is not learning self-discipline/self-control. So when praise is given we need to ask what is our intention. Is it to achieve control, or is to teach personal responsibility? Ideally, praise should be a form of encouragement, supporting learners in taking responsibility for either their behaviour or academic progress. It should support them to be intrinsically motivated to accept what they can do and achieve what they could.

In fact praise can essentially serve as information. It provides a student with feedback on their progress. Perhaps the guidelines from Alfie Kohn (2018) can help us. He argues that praise should be for what children and young people do, not who they are. Perhaps another well known mantra fits well here. 'Praise the Process not the Product.'

Returning now to *Praise in Public*. So, allowing for the caveats on praise, we need to be sensitive about giving praise in public. For the majority of students this will be problem free, but there will be some for who it will not. These will be young people who have sadly come to associate praise from adults with subsequent emotional/physical abuse. For others it may be social embarrassment and/or fear of negative peer responses. Remember, especially for adolescent, they wish more to be accepted and valued by their peers and not adults.

So what of Remand in Private. I think the “R” is best used to stand for ‘remind’ rather than ‘reprimand’ in private. Imagine that as a teacher or support staff a senior manager or your team leader started to discuss your failings in the staff room. It would be so inappropriate, so unprofessional. You are with your peers and any problems or difficulties that exist over your work should be discussed in private. Think of the classroom as being equivalent to the staff room for students. This might help explain secondary behaviours (Rogers, 2015). It is not unusual when a student is being reprimanded in public for them to display additional negative behaviours. So, for example, a student is told forcefully, to return to their seat and stop disturbing others. The teacher may hear the student make a muttered negative comment about the teacher. While not directed at them, it is intended to be heard. Or they knock chairs over as they return to their seat. These secondary behaviours can be read as the student saving face in front of their peers. It is ‘as if’ they are saying I might be complying to the teacher, but look I am not doing so passively, I can still disrupt as I comply.

It seems sometimes that adolescents have been on their own training programmes to learn how best to manage adults who try to manage them!

The idea that students should be reminded in private takes the view that students often make behavioural mistakes. There are of course many reasons for this. The first best assumption for the adult is that the student unintentionally misbehaved. So by reminding the student of what they should be doing, and perhaps asking if they needed any help in achieving this, the adult is clearly stressing the inappropriateness of the behaviour, while maintaining a good relationship with the student. Worth reminding ourselves that it is the behaviour that is the problem, not the student.

## References

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Kohn, A. (2018). *Punished by Rewards*. Houghton Mifflin Company.

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