

## **Ten Reasons to NOT Say, “Good Job”**

As Shared by The Therapist Neurodiversity Collective:  
<https://therapistndc.org/avoiding-the-good-job-habit/>

- “Good Job!” has limited emotional meaning and constricts the complexity of interaction possible. A child may tune out “Good job!” as no more than background noise or may be bothered or confused and turn away.
- “Good job!” places judgement on specific actions and discourages a child’s initiative, creativity and experimentation.
- “Good Job!” values an action, whether purposeful or not, so that the child does not have time to evaluate their act and its outcome for themselves, and form concepts that can be applied more generally.
- “Good Job!” creates a relationship of dominance and control, rather than a relationship with shared pleasure, reciprocity, a natural flow of communication and co-regulation. A child may feel resentful when their interests, choices and feelings are ignored.
- A child may wait passively for instructions and then rush to completion in anticipation of “Good Job!” and other rewards. Later in life, they may be vulnerable to coercion
- After hearing “Good Job!” a child may repeat the praised actions rather than planning and challenging themselves in a new effort, thus missing the potential of feeling pride in accomplishing their own, more difficult goal.
- “Good Job!” given after obedience that ends a challenging behavior may not address the underlying reason for a child’s distress. Without deeper understanding and resolution, the original problem will likely emerge in another undesirable behavior.
- Some children learn to manipulate interactions to gain more frequent responses of “Good Job!” or alternatively learn to purposefully frustrate or deceive the adult.
- When an adult directs actions punctuated with “Good Job!”, a child fails to develop the capacity for collaborative shared problem solving, understanding perspective of others, and considering others’ experiences with empathy.
- With constant directives, a child may fail to develop a true sense of their own identity, wishes, interests and needs. As an adult, they may then lack the capacity to advocate for themselves.

## Alternatives to “Good Job”

- Don’t say anything! Join a child’s play with your actions, expanding their activity by building on their interests.
- Offer a range of different emotional expressions and gestures that clarify and deepen meaning for the child and create a shared affective experience: surprise (Oh!), frustration (Ugh!; Grr!), disappointment (Ah!), delight (Ha!), sadness (Umm), confusion (Hm?), concern (Aye..), disgust (Eww. Uck!) etc.
- Give informational comments and observations: “You are making it so tall!” “It keeps falling over- ah!” “You hit it so hard that the ball went over the fence!” “Oh! That little ball got stuck.” “You are working really hard to make that stand up.”
- Use sounds and gestures to encourage a child to sustain focus and effort, “Push!!” “You can do it!” or to calm and overly excited child: deep breath and a calming, “Whoa. That was fun!”
- Help define the meaning of actions: “I see you are sitting.. that tells me that you are ready.” “You’re looking at the ball, does that mean you want to play catch?”
- Notice patterns: “The red king always gets the prize!” “Each time I win, you want to change the rules.”
- Ask questions using gestures and words: Where? What? When? Who? Now or later? Which one? How far? How fast? How many? The big one or the little one? Is that what you wanted? Is that what you expected? Do you remember...?
- Offer your own ideas, perspective, opinions and feelings: “I think..” “I like..” “I don’t want..” “That makes me...” “I’m worried that..” “How about if we..?”
- Offer help: “The blue one you need is over there.” “Do you want help to go faster?” “You can ask for help to open it if you want.”
- Explain problems, solicit ideas and give choices, “You both want the same one. I wonder what would make it fair?” “Should we try x or y?”
- Give surprise, non-contingent praise: “It was fun playing with you.” “You have good ideas!”
- Express genuine thanks and appreciation: “Thanks for helping to clean up”; “Thank you for waiting for me.”