

The One Idea that Will Change the Way You Parent

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I read a book. It changed everything I thought about parenting. [Raising a Child With Soul: How Time-Tested Jewish Wisdom Can Shape Your Child's Character](#) by Slovie Jungreis-Wolff is heavy on lessons and heavy on Bible stories. But don't let that scare you. Even if you're not Jewish or Christian, there are insights from Jungreis-Wolff that will change the way you parent forever.

I feel desperate to share one of many remarkable insights I gained from this book. I want to SHOUT this idea to all parents from the top of the Empire State Building.

Jungreis-Wolff writes that one key to building good character in young children is to avoid false praise. She says that when a child displays a special interest or talent (baking cookies, drawing a picture, finger-painting, etc.) do not give false praise that they are amazing painters, superb chefs or the best artists. Do not hang every picture on the fridge. Doing that will only make their knees buckle when the real world shows them that they are not as talented as they thought they were.

Instead of boosting their ego on empty compliments, boost their soul through generosity. How? Take their specially-made crafts and cookies and give them away! Encourage your child to mail the picture to Grandma, the finger painting to Aunt Laura. Take the cookies to the fire department or neighbors and let your child share the gift.

When your child receives a phone call from Grandpa saying, "Thank you so much for sending the picture, it brightened my day!" your child will know that he can bring light into the world through giving. When the fireman shows enormous appreciation for a single cookie, your child will feel proud of himself for bringing such joy to a stranger. And isn't that what parents are supposed to do? Teach our children to build self-esteem by experiencing pride and joy when they make the world a little bit brighter. It's common sense, uncommonly used.

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