

THE POWER OF ENCOURAGEMENT

An Information Sheet from the Guidance Counsellor

We all know what a difference it makes to be encouraged. Our word **courage** comes from the Latin word for heart. So to encourage means **to put heart into someone**.

Encouragement helps us to grow as human beings. We never outgrow our need for encouragement but children need it especially because their identities are often fragile and they look to significant adults in their lives to affirm them as worthwhile individuals.

As adults, parents, teachers, friends, we need to be careful not to **discourage** children. We can do this, sometimes without even realising it, by:

Focusing on mistakes and failing to balance our view by reminding ourselves of the child's achievements.

Having negative expectations about performance at school or about behaviour, thinking that the child will never improve.

Being perfectionistic; setting standards which are unrealistic and always unachievable.

Being overprotective; not allowing children to make their own mistakes and take responsibility for their actions.

Here are some simple ways in which we can **encourage** children.

Give responsibility that is appropriate to the age of the child; by doing this we communicate that we trust people to make good decisions.

Seek opinions and advice from children; this communicates that people are worthwhile and that they have something valuable to contribute. It also models that it is alright to ask for help and not to always have all the answers.

Acknowledge achievements no matter how small.

Focus on progress rather than perfection.

Separate worth from accomplishments; children are important for who they are rather than for what they do.

Separate worth from mistakes; people are always more than their mistakes and making mistakes never takes away from their importance and worth as people.

Encourage and respect independence.

Avoid the temptation to rescue; it is important not to shield children from the consequences of their actions.

If you would like more information on child and adolescent development or to discuss particular concerns, please contact Brian Thompson on 3839 4977.