



# Coaching Your Child to Be An Encourager



Words (and actions) have the power to encourage or discourage. How can you help your child be one who lifts others up instead of tearing them down?

Run a relay twice to explain the meaning of and the importance of discouraging/encouraging words. Gather paper cups, a bucket of water, an empty bowl or pitcher, and if possible, a whistle for the referees and a pompom for the cheerleaders. Choose two people in the family to be the referees (discouragers—pointing out all the mistakes) and the cheerleaders (encouragers—giving words that help). The object of the game is to fill the empty pitcher with water from the bucket one cup at a time. Mark a starting point. Time them to see how quickly they can do it.

The first time, ask the referees to point out all the mistakes (*you'll never make it, you dropped some water, you're too slow, etc.*). Then run it a second time with the cheerleaders giving words of encouragement (*you can do it, you're almost there, you're going to win, etc.*) Afterwards, ask:

- *How did you feel when they were shouting discouraging words to you?*
- *How did you feel when they were shouting encouragement?*
- *What words of encouragement did they shout to you?*
- *Did their encouragement make you want to keep going?*

Read Ephesians 4:29. To *edify* means to build up. God is pleased when we build up (and not tear down with unkind words) others.

**Brainstorm ways to encourage others and help them act on their ideas.** Make a list of people who might need encouragement (family member who is sick, friend who is sad, lonely neighbor, crying sibling, etc.) Then think what you could do for that person and follow through (make and send a card; ask *Would you like to play with me?*; spend time listening; etc.)

**Discourage discouraging words.** What is acceptable and what is not? Make a list of words not allowed (*I hate you*) and what is acceptable (*I am angry with you*). When your children say mean or



hateful words, stop and make them think of three good things to say instead.

**Praise encouraging words.** Pass out markers and half pieces of copy or construction paper. Ask family members to write encouraging words on each. (*Keep going. Thank you. I like you. That's great! Can I help you?* etc.) Tape these to a piece of twine or yarn to make a banner and hang it so everyone can be reminded of words that build up and not tear down.

