

INSIGHTS

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Increase good feelings at home

Family harmony is linked to good will and positive emotions. Here's how to increase good feelings in your family and make your home a happy place.



Strong families thrive on good feelings.

They are not devoid of conflict or criticism, but generally strong families are pleasant environments to be part of.

One way to increase good feelings in your family is to increase the number of compliments.

As a general rule, the ratio of compliments to criticism should be around **five to one**. That is, there should be five times more positive, affirmative comments than negative comments.

In unhealthy families this ratio is reversed. When the ratio gets to around five negative comments for every one positive comment, families can be quite toxic.

How does your family rate on this scale?

If you use children only as a measure I suspect that the compliment to criticism ratio will be a little scary.

Some siblings can be unkind to each other, and find it hard to say a pleasant word. This skews the ratio a lot and can make family life awful for everyone. BUT this can change over time.

Here are five ideas to help you alter the **compliments to criticisms** ratio:

1. Increase your own number of affirmations, compliments, affectionate phrases and kind remarks in order to skew the ratio a bit. Aim for a seven to one ratio. Not only is this good modelling for your kids, but it will make family-life more harmonious.

2. Keep a check on your use of good feeling (and self-esteem) killers. Eradicate comments such as: *"Typical boy!"* *"If I've told you once I've told you a thousand times, don't..."* *"What a stupid thing to say to your brother/sister!"* Bite your tongue rather than say what you may be thinking.

3. Make kids aware of their language and the potential harm to self-esteem, not to mention family harmony, that constant criticism can cause. Use "I" statements to let kids know the impact of their negative talk on you. *"When you talk so aggressively I feel quite scared about what you are going to do next."* It's impossible for kids to disagree with "I" statements.

4. Develop the habit of following up a negative with a positive. When I was teaching I always tried to follow up the disciplining of a student with a compliment or some positive feedback so that we could maintain a good relationship. Do the same in your family. Follow up discipline, a rebuke or a negative comment with a positive act or comment. **TEACH YOUR KIDS TO DO THE SAME!**

5. Let the bad feelings out. Sometimes there can be such a build-up of ill-will between siblings that you need to let the bad feelings out. One way to do this is let a child vent to you about their sibling. You may not like what you hear but a clearing of the air can work wonders in terms of improving the family atmosphere.

All these suggestions start with you.

Like everything in family life, whatever you want from your kids, you must do first. So to increase good feelings in your home aim to keep to the compliment to criticism ratio at five to one or more!