



MONTH OF MARCH
Behavior vs. outcome
from

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Hello March! This month is full of championship events and series finals. It's is an exciting time for the competitors and perhaps a stressful time for parents. This is also a time where racers will compare, analyze and judge their performance. Encouraging focus on the process and not the result will help quiet the negative self-talk and hopefully alleviate the need to compare. In this situation, as in the examples Alex sites below being clear and honest is kind and will help promote the process and not the outcome.

Good luck and enjoy!

Julie Woodworth - VARA Executive Director

BEHAVIOR VS. OUTCOME



There is a strong message in our society about how to boost children's self-esteem, and a main part of that message is: *Protect them from failure!* While this may help with the immediate problem of a child's disappointment, it can be harmful in the long run.

Everyone has heard parents yell "Good Job," when a little boy hits a home run and "Good job" when another little boy strikes out. Can you count how many times you hear parents praising kids with a "good job," yelled out at a youth sporting event? Most do it to show support, but really, to tell someone they are doing a good job means you are making a judgment that something is good instead of bad. It automatically implies there is a right and a wrong way.

Instead of yelling out "good job", compliment the kids for their effort. This allows the child to own their accomplishment. It might seem like a small nuance in successful communication and confidence building, but it's much more than just that.

A child who hits a home run technically did do a good job. He scored a run, which is the object of the game; therefore, he performed the job well and did it right. A child who strikes out didn't do a good job. He actually failed. So, telling him, "Good job" would be misplaced and meaningless. Instead offer a "really liked your effort" or "try again next time".

Now let's relate it to ski racing. An athlete finishes a training run and the coach says "great job, go back up and do that again". It's nice to hear something positive every now and then but run after run starts to get frustrating and the athlete starts to wonder "is it really good? Isn't there something I can do to make it better? To make improvements?" You can be honest in a positive way.

5 reasons you should only say "Good Job" when you mean it:

1. Children should be focused on behavior not outcome. When they receive positive feedback based on outcome they learn to rely on their coach/parents for validation instead of figuring out how to trust and listen to their own feelings. You want the child to feel good about themselves without depending on anyone else's approval.

2. Kids are smart. Telling them they've done a good job when they just struck out seriously diminishes your credibility and relegates your future comments, even worthy "good jobs," to background noise.

3. Children need to be able to take pride in their accomplishments and escape feeling judged by their support system should they not perform.

4. If your goal is getting the kids to perform better, believe it or not, too much praise can actually repel motivation and confidence. Rewarding effort encourages kids to try again, while praising outcome can make them feel that if they can't live up to the expectation, they would rather just stop trying than fail.

5. Just saying "good job" doesn't give them any specifics. Providing positive reinforcement by saying things like, "*I like how tough you were*" or "*I liked that you don't give up and that you showed good sportsmanship,*" increases the chance they will repeat that behavior.

The next time you find those two little words, "Good job," flying out of your mouth ask yourself if that is *really* what you are trying to communicate. Athletes have fun when they are making progress!



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Please visit the [VARA Youth Coordinator Page](#) on the [VARA](#) site.