

Lavishing Kids With Praise Can Make Them Feel Worse About Themselves

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The Atlantic:

“Hollywood dishes out too much praise for small things,” the great actor Jimmy Stewart once said. “I won’t let it get me, but too much praise can turn a fellow’s head if he doesn’t watch his step.” He was talking about the sick power compliments can have on a person’s ego: You hear enough times that you’re awesome and you start to believe that you’re the awesomest. And then you become insufferable.

A new set of studies shows that for kids, high praise can have the opposite effect on self-esteem: It can actually make some children feel worse about themselves. “That’s Not Just Beautiful—That’s Incredibly Beautiful: The Adverse Impact of Inflated Praise on Children with Low Self-Esteem” found that when adults give excessive compliments to children with low confidence, the children were less likely to pursue challenges.

One of the studies involved 240 children who visited a science museum in the Netherlands. The researchers asked each of the kids to complete a self-esteem assessment to determine if they had high or low confidence. Then, the children were asked to draw a famous painting and told that a professional painter would evaluate it. After they finished their paintings, the children were given a card from the painter (who did not in fact exist) with one of three responses: “You made an *incredibly* beautiful drawing!” (inflated praise); “You made a beautiful drawing!” (non-inflated praise); or no comment about the drawing at all (no praise).

Read the whole story: [*The Atlantic*](#)