

Encouragement or Pressure?

Encouragement should build confidence —
not make children question themselves.

Most adults encourage children because they care.

They want children to believe in themselves.

To keep going.

To try again.

But sometimes encouragement stops feeling encouraging.

Sometimes it starts feeling like pressure.

Especially when a child is already trying their best.

Encouragement

- Builds confidence
- Recognises effort
- Respects capacity
- Creates safety
- Allows flexibility
- Supports growth

Pressure

- Creates self-doubt
- Ignores limits
- Assumes more is possible
- Creates fear of failure
- Makes rest feel wrong
- Turns support into stress

When children struggle, adults often see effort.
Children may be experiencing capacity.

Not every challenge needs more pushing.
Sometimes it needs more understanding.

Try Saying Instead...

Supportive encouragement makes room for capacity.

Instead of:

"There's no such word as can't."

Try:

"There might be a reason this feels difficult today."

Instead of:

"You did it yesterday."

Try:

"Let's work out what feels different today."

Instead of:

"Don't give up."

Try:

"Let's take a break and come back to it."

Instead of:

"You're not trying hard enough."

Try:

"I can see you're finding this hard."

Encouragement sounds like...

I believe you.'

I can see you're trying.

Let's find another way.'

You don't have to prove yourself.

Needing a break does not mean you failed..

Children need encouragement that understands capacity.

Before Encouraging, Ask...

Sometimes the most helpful response is curiosity, not motivation.

Before encouraging, ask:

- ☐ Is this a capacity issue or a willingness issue?
- ☐ Is the child tired, overwhelmed, in pain, or overloaded?
- ☐ Has something changed since yesterday?
- ☐ Am I encouraging effort, or dismissing a limit?
- ☐ Am I helping the child succeed, or asking them to prove themselves?

Capacity can change.

A child may have been able to do something yesterday and struggle with it today.

Difficulty does not always mean a lack of effort.

Curiosity often tells us more than encouragement alone.