

Praise; a useful intervention for teachers and learners!

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What is known about praise:

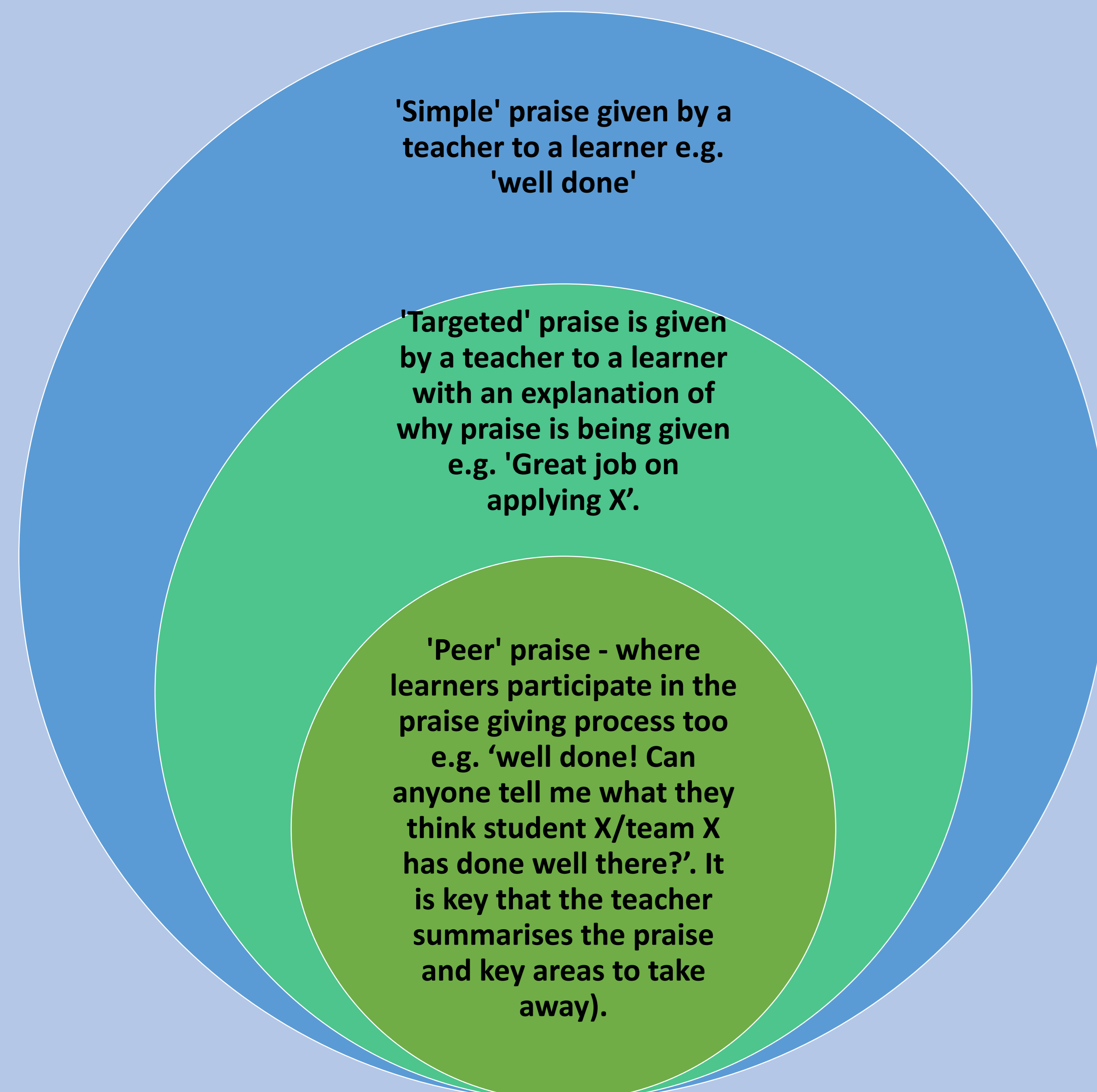
Praise can be defined as 'to commend the worth of or to express approval or admiration' (Brophy, 1981). Key education literature suggests that praise helps:

- The development of a 'comfortable' teaching and learning environment for students (Ramsden, 1992).
- Encourage the development of self-belief in learners (Brown and Atkins, 1988).
- Students develop critical thinking and reflection skills (Kund, 2009).

'Good praise' is hard to prescribe due to the numerous ways of providing praise to learners, however despite the variety general and nursing pedagogy agree that praise should:

- Be given in the moment that the learner behaves/demonstrates what is being praised.
- Praise should aim to demonstrate what exactly a learner has done well.
- If possible, praise should not be limited to teachers praising learners, environments should be created where learners also praise other learners (Scaife, 2001; Elisabeth, Christine and Ewa, 2009; Biggs and Tang, 2011; Gravells, 2012).

3 types of praise compiled from literature:



The application of praise in the teaching and learning environment:

Who: The use of praise was applied on two occasions during teaching session for nursing students across two pre-registration courses (both classes students were studying at level 6).

What: Praise was given out to students in two varieties. 1 – students were praised in a 'simple' format such as 'well done' or 'good'. 2 – Praise was provided **at the point a learner did something well**, and a short description of **why praise was being given was also verbalised** by the teacher to the student/students.

Why: The aim of praise was to initially create a comfortable environment for students; one of the sessions was simulating a 'crisis event' and the other was the first session of a level 6 module which asked for students to create their own simulation session on an area of clinical practice. Both teaching sessions were novel learning environments and experiences for the students at hand. The use of praise was also employed to try and facilitate a metacognitive process for the learning taking place.

Result: Each teaching session was observed by a fellow academic (one a peer and the other a mentor/more experienced academic). Some of the key observations made regarding praise are detailed in the table to the right. Also, students from one of the sessions gave their experiences and feedback of the session as detailed below.

Discoveries from the teaching sessions facilitated:

For a learner to develop and have the motivation to participate in the teaching and learning environment, it is key that they are comfortable, which is something that the approach a teacher takes help to shape (Biggs and Tang, 2011). Furthermore, the provision of feedback, where praise is part of the process, is key to teasing out the emotional engagement that learners bring to the environment (Laurillard, 2012).

Feedback received from my mentor, peer (see table below) and students (see student quotes below) during the teaching sessions where I consciously used praise as an intervention was for the most part positive. Even so, I found it easier to accept areas of development given to me by my mentor, peer and students, then to digest praise given. The ability to reflect is therefore highlighted as being as important for learners, as it is for teachers. The experience I had with consciously giving praise made me reflect on my own relationship with not only giving praise, but also receiving it.

Mentor observed session:	Peer observed session:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'Encouraging students to expand on comments made by asking questions ie; 'that is a very good point, is there anything else that would have helped with....?' • The use of "good" or "well done" was present in the session. • The use of "you all did very well". 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provided students with prompts to expand on both good/correct information and areas for development or where students were not sure, via questions used to facilitate discussions.

Key learning moving forward:

- As a teacher it is vital to reflect on ones' own relationship with praise as it can affect the way praise is given/or not given to learners.
- The process and function of praise is varied, so it is key to understand what kind of praise to use to elicit a certain outcome (see diagram to the left for a quick reference guide).
- There is a need for further research in current day uses and benefits of praise as an intervention within both general higher education pedagogy, as well as nursing specific pedagogy.

References:

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