I overheard a friend tell her eight-year-old daughter last week:

“You did such a good job helping your brother yesterday. You are such lovely big sister!”

My friend’s face lit up with a smile as she said it. She gently put her hand on her daughter’s shoulder at the same time.

The little girl beamed, then she went off to play.

It was a simple parenting moment among many that my friend would have initiated that day.

I couldn’t help thinking that it doesn’t take much to grow kids’ self esteem and create good feelings at home.

A sincerely given compliment has an enormous impact on the person who receives it. We all grow a little taller, at least inside, when we are given a compliment.

We also feel closer to the person who complimented us.

Compliments satisfy the deep craving we all have to be appreciated.

There is one problem. While compliments are easy to give, they are also easy not to give.

We forget.

We underestimate their impact.

We haven’t developed the habit of giving compliments.

Amplify the impact

There were two things my friend did that amplified the impact of her compliment.

1. She smiled as she gave the compliment.
2. She touched her daughter as well.

Touch will always amplify a compliment. It makes it personal.

Her mother’s smile told her daughter what her mum really felt. In fact, the touch and smile said it all. The words reinforced the smile and touch.

The compliment was given and received through three senses – visually, kinaesthetically and auditorily.

That’s how kids receive all our messages – they see, they feel, they hear – though we often focus on the words and forget the visual and kinaesthetic.

Next time your child does something worthwhile take the time to give a compliment.

Smile (tell your face you are happy) and add a little touch to really let them know how you feel. Watch your child’s reaction. It’ll have a significant impact.

It doesn’t take much.