



Make Prevention a CHOICE

Building Self-Esteem In Your Child

It is important for each of us to have a good, positive self-image. We are often told how we feel about ourselves makes a big difference in how we perform our jobs and how we relate to our family, friends and others around us. As parents we are given the responsibility of building self-esteem in our children. Showing love and affection, praising them, and offering sound guidance are all ways we build a firm foundation for our children's self-esteem. Building self-esteem in our children does not happen overnight. It takes time for parents to learn the skills needed to help their children. The process of learning and applying these skills spans a lifetime since the emotional support we offer our children will not end when they turn eighteen.

DEVELOPING YOUR CHILD'S SELF-ESTEEM:

- Spend quality time with your children. Ask them about their day. Give your children an opportunity to talk about things that concern them. Listen.
- Let your children know you value the things they do. Give your children some responsibilities appropriate to their age that show you value what they do. They will feel valued and useful.
- Reward your children often with words of praise, a special privilege, or increased responsibility for a job well done. Show that you trust them. Emphasize the good things they do, not the bad.
- Take their ideas, emotions and feelings seriously. Don't belittle them. Their feelings and emotions are as real to them as yours are to you.

BE A ROLE MODEL FOR YOUR CHILD:

- Be a good role model. Let your children know that you feel good about yourself. Also let them see that you too can make mistakes and can learn from them.
- Help your children develop an appreciation of people with different values and backgrounds. Point out other people's strengths.

DEVELOP REASONABLE EXPECTATIONS:

- Have reasonable expectations for children. Be sensitive to their abilities at different stages of their development
- Help them learn the importance of spending time wisely.
- When setting ground rules, let children know why the rules are being made. For older children, let them be a part of the decision making. Be sure to discuss the consequences of obeying or disobeying rules that are set.
- Talk with your children about how to make decisions. Show them how to use what they know to make good choices, including how to see different alternatives and the consequences of each.
- Teach your children to deal with problems as they come along. Show them how “putting off” things can sometimes make problems worse.
- While you may not always agree with decisions your children make, allow them the chance to make mistakes and learn from them as long as their decisions are not harmful or dangerous.

OFFER POSITIVE MESSAGES TO YOUR CHILDREN:

- Use phrases that build self-esteem, such as “Thank you, I couldn’t have done it without you,” or “That was a good idea!” Avoid “put downs.”
- Show your love and affection, and tell your children how much you love them everyday, even if they feel they’re too old to hear it!
- Tell your children what they *can do* rather than what they cannot do. If parents restrict their use of strong negative words to only very important situations when correction is essential, children are more apt to hear and respect the positive words they hear.

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