



Your Child's Self-Esteem

The Facts

Parents greatly shape the developing self-image of their children. A large part of children's self-concept is formed through the verbal and non-verbal, conscious and unconscious interactions between parent and child. Children who are loved by their parents unconditionally will learn self-acceptance and self-appreciation. Besides developing self-image, parents contribute to building children's self-esteem.

Research has shown a strong link between a child's self-esteem and his or her academic success; children who feel good about themselves learn more easily and retain information longer. In fact, they do better in every way. A strong sense of self enables a child to better handle the ups and downs of daily life, including prejudice, abuse, addiction, delinquency and violence. Parents are the single greatest influence on their children's self-esteem.

Expressions Of Self-Esteem

Signs of positive self-esteem

- A loving nature-accepting of others
- Confidence-willing to try new things
- Generosity-willing to share
- Success in school-attentive, questioning and social
- The ability to develop lasting relationships
- Individuality
- Willingness to lead or follow
- Tolerant of others viewpoints and differences

Signs of low self-esteem

- Lacks self-confidence
- Lacks self-respect
- Insecure about trying new things
- Underachievement in school
- Avoids others and spends too much time alone
- Allows oneself to be picked on
- Acts out to get attention
- Exhibits rude, disrespectful, or delinquent behavior
- Overly fearful
- Develops eating disorders
- Uses alcohol or drugs
- Poor sleeping habits
- Easily frustrated
- Depression



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How You Can Help

Catch your child being good

Often parents only react when their child does something wrong rather than taking time to acknowledge and reward the positive. Make a point of finding something to praise everyday. Watch the use of excessive praise without regard to the reason, it may give kids an unrealistic perspective of what it takes to be successful outside the family.

Give your undivided attention

We sometimes pretend to listen or ignore our child's attempts to communicate with us. This can cause children to misbehave. Children of all ages feel better about themselves when they know others value what they have to say. By listening, you convey the importance of your children's ideas, opinions and feelings.

Keep expectations realistic

Recognize that each child is an individual who will develop at his or her own pace. Adjust your expectations to the child's age, temperament, and background. Be careful not to base your expectations on your unfulfilled wishes and values rather than the children's wants and needs.

Create a safe, nurturing home environment

Make your home a safe haven for your family. Never argue or fight with a spouse in front of your children. Watch for signs of abuse by others, problems in school, trouble with peers, and other potential factors that may affect your child's self-esteem. Deal with these issues sensitively but swiftly.

Choose your words carefully

Children are very sensitive to parents' words. Remember to praise your child not only for a job well done, but also for effort. During times of disappointment or crisis, your child's weakened self-esteem can be strengthened when you let the child know that your love and support remain unchanged.

Offer choices

Whenever possible, allow children to make choices, appropriate to their age level. They will develop confidence by being permitted to experiment, make mistakes and learn in non-threatening situations.

Do good deeds

Teach your child to say and do good deeds. It builds good character and produces positive feelings of self-worth.

Produced by
PARTNERS IN PARENTING (PIP) (800) 457-2736
Colorado Family Education, Resources & Training
Colorado State University Cooperative Extension
Funded by the Alcohol & Drug Abuse Division and CSAP

Information for this PIP TIP collected from a variety of research based resources.

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