
I N S I G H T S

FOR FAMILIES



Fostering healthy self-esteem



❖ INSIGHTS FOR FAMILIES is provided by your child's school in recognition of your role as a partner in education. Adapted by Judy McDaniel, communications consultant, from information provided at <http://www.kidshealth.org>.

How can a parent help to foster healthy self-esteem in a child? Here are some tips that can make a big difference:

- ❖ Watch what you say. Children are very sensitive to your words. Remember to praise your children not only for a job well done, but also for effort. But be truthful. For example, if a child doesn't make the soccer team, avoid saying something like, "Well, next time you'll work harder and make it." Instead, say something like, "Well, you didn't make the team, but I'm really proud of the effort you put into it." Reward effort and completion instead of outcome.
- ❖ Be a positive role model. If you are excessively harsh on yourself, pessimistic, or unrealistic about your abilities and limitations, your children may eventually mirror you. Nurture your own self-esteem, and your children will have a great role model.
- ❖ Identify and redirect your children's inaccurate beliefs. It's important for parents to identify kids' irrational beliefs about themselves, whether they are about perfection, attractiveness, ability, or anything else. Helping your children set accurate standards and be realistic in evaluating themselves will help your children have healthier self-concepts. Inaccurate perceptions of self can take root and become reality to a child.
- ❖ Be spontaneous and affectionate with your children. Your love will go a long way to boost your children's self-esteem. Give your children hugs. Tell your children you're proud of them. Give praise frequently and honestly, without overdoing it. Kids can tell whether something comes from the heart.
- ❖ Give positive, accurate feedback. A comment such as, "You always work yourself up into such a frenzy!" will cause a child to start believing he or she has no control over his or her outbursts. A better statement is, "You were really mad at your brother. But I appreciate that you didn't yell at him or hit him." This acknowledges your child's feelings and rewards the choice that your child made, encouraging your child to make the right choice again next time.

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- ❖ Create a safe, nurturing home environment. Children who do not feel safe or are being abused at home will suffer immensely from low self-esteem. A child who is exposed to parents who fight and argue repeatedly may become depressed and withdrawn. Always remember to respect your children.
- ❖ Make your home a safe haven for your family. Watch for signs of abuse by others, problems in school, trouble with peers, and other potential factors that may affect your children's self-esteem. Deal with these issues sensitively but swiftly.
- ❖ Help your children become involved in constructive experiences. Activities that encourage cooperation rather than competition are especially helpful in fostering self-esteem. For example, mentoring programs in which an older child helps a younger one learn to read can do wonders for both children.