

BUILDING CAPABLE KIDS - PROMOTING SELF-ESTEEM

Dear Parents and Caregivers:

What is self-esteem? Why is it really important?

Self-esteem is the thoughts, feelings and ideas that we have about ourselves. Whether we like and accept ourselves and how we think others feel about us.

In one way or another most of the things a child or an adult does are directly related to feelings about self. The friends one chooses, how you relate to others, the type of person you marry, creativity, achievement, and basic personality all are affected by ones concept of self.

A positive self-esteem is not only the foundation of sound mental health but probably is the key ingredient for a successful and happy life. The building of a good self image in our children constitutes one of ... if not the greatest ... challenge of parenthood.

Self-esteem is learned. It can be changed.

We are not born with high or low self-esteem. For a young child a sense of self-worth is nurtured by the people closely involved in their care--mom, dad, grandparents, or people providing day care.

You can:

Remember! You can enhance a child's self-image and their relationships with others.

- You can see the child as an individual at their own rate.
- You can remember not to compare the child to other children.
- You can be sincere in your praise and encouragement.
- You can avoid name calling or labeling which could cause shame and resentment.
- You can focus attention on what the child has learned and other aspects of their personality which make the child special.
- You can call the child by their name as you talk with the child.

- You can help to provide a safe, supportive, loving atmosphere where the child knows they are valued for themselves.
- You can provide opportunity for the child to accomplish new tasks.
- You can recognize their achievements.
- You can provide opportunities for the child to explore new roles the child may someday assume, so that the child knows what it means to be a mother, father or friend.

What else can you do to promote feelings of self esteem?

Check your own feelings of self-worth. Experience has shown that parents must feel secure and good about themselves before it is possible to help their children reach this same goal. Parents with high self-esteem are most successful in creating a home atmosphere where communication techniques and family routines help children to feel loved and important for their own special talents and qualities.

Encourage independence. Children build self-confidence when they make appropriate choices and decisions. For example, allowing a young child to determine their own bedtime may not be in their best interest because the child has little concept of their physical needs. On the other hand, asking the child to make choices about the clothing the child wears for play may be quite realistic.

Be Realistic in your Expectations. When expectations for a child are based on their age, their particular personality and the current circumstances in which the child is operating, the child can more easily experience success and enjoy a feeling of accomplishment. Repeated successes make a child feel more valuable and consequently build their self-esteem.

You can:

Be positive and honest with your child. Try some of these ways of praising your child for his/her efforts:

I knew you could do it!
 You remembered.
 That's better than ever.
 FANTASTIC!
 You're very good at that.
 SENSATIONAL!
 How did you do that?
 I'm very proud of you!
 That's RIGHT!
 I like that.
 You haven't missed a thing.
 That kind of work makes me very happy.
 TREMENDOUS!
 That's quite an improvement.
 Congratulations!
 You're getting better every day.
 Good for you!
 You're learning fast!
 Now you have the hang of it.
 You did a lot of work today!
 You really make my job fun.
 Now that's what I call a fine job.
 You're really improving!



Well, look at you go!
Good going!
Keep it up!
Keep on trying!
You're the Best!
I knew you could do it.
Much better!
You're on the right track!
Keep working on it, you're getting better.
You're very good at that.
Way to Go!
You make it look easy.
WONDERFUL!
Good thinking!
WOW!
You've got your brain in gear today.
TERRIFIC!
That's better.
That's quite an improvement.
That's the best ever.
It's a pleasure to teach you when you work like that.

Sincerely,

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