



CHILDREN'S
HOME
SOCIETY OF
CALIFORNIA
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Family Education Program materials and podcasts, and information on CHS programs can also be found on our website at www.chs-ca.org.



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SELF-ESTEEM

BUILDING A CHILD'S CONFIDENCE AND SUCCESS



Self-esteem is how you think and feel about yourself. As children grow and develop, they form opinions about themselves through the words and actions of other people. By providing a loving and caring environment, parents and caregivers can positively shape a child's self-image.



Children with a high level of self-esteem feel good about themselves, helping them keep a positive attitude toward different circumstances. Low self-esteem can cause a child to feel insecure, fearful, and anxious. As a parent or caretaker, you play an important role in helping children develop the self-confidence needed to succeed in many aspects of their lives.



★ LEVELS OF SELF-ESTEEM

The way a child acts and reacts to different situations provides information about his level of self-esteem. By recognizing signs of low and high self-esteem, parents and caregivers can appropriately meet each child's needs in order to promote self-confidence.

Signs of Low Self-Esteem:

- Avoids new and unfamiliar experiences and situations
- Puts down own abilities
- Blames others for own mistakes
- Easily influenced by others
- Easily frustrated
- Defensive and easily hurt by criticism
- Continually wishes to change appearance
- Lacks classroom involvement (for example: not raising hand, not participating in class discussions)

Signs of High Self-Esteem:

- Approaches new situations and challenges eagerly
- Proud of achievements
- Learns from own mistakes
- Accepts helpful criticism
- Confident about appearance

Remember that children do not think and act as adults do. Set realistic expectations of them and avoid excessive criticism.

★ EFFECTS ON CHILDREN

A child's level of self-esteem affects different aspects of her life and personality. If a child lacks self-confidence, she tends to fear new environments and opportunities, limiting herself and her abilities. A confident child is likely to approach situations with a positive and open attitude. Some areas of a child's life that are affected are:

- Relationships with others
- Attitude
- Ability to make healthy decisions
- Problem-solving skills
- Energy level
- Approach to new situations
- Creativity
- Response to peer pressure
- Ability to reach goals
- Success at school

★ CULTIVATING HIGH SELF-ESTEEM

Children's views of themselves are shaped by what they hear and experience as they grow. Adults can help children build a strong sense of confidence by:

- Helping them recognize and appreciate their uniqueness (for example: ethnic heritage, special talents)
- Being a model of self-confidence through your own words, actions, and attitude
- Communicating unconditional love
- Acknowledging and encouraging children's efforts
- Avoiding comparisons to siblings, friends, or peers
- Allowing children to make their own decisions and act independently even if they make mistakes, as long as they are safe (for example: choosing outfits, putting on clothes, tying shoes, feeding themselves)
- Using positive and encouraging language



★ BE INVOLVED WITH YOUR CHILDREN

By being involved in your child's daily life, you can reassure her that you love and value her. Being available and spending time with your child shows her that she is important. Express your love and appreciation daily by talking, playing, and showing affection. Be involved by creating opportunities for your child to be successful at developing new skills and tasks. More specifically, for different ages:

Birth to five years:

- Encourage and acknowledge growth and development such as laughing, rolling over, crawling, sitting up, walking, playing with toys and putting them away, using a spoon, drinking from a cup, using words to express thoughts and feelings, and cooperating with others.
- Give attention to emotional and physical needs.
- Hang up drawings, artwork, and other accomplishments.
- Allow your child to help with household chores like setting the table or putting away laundry.

6 to 13 years:

- Celebrate special accomplishments. For example, student of the month, learning to swim, learning to ride a bicycle, or improving grades at school.
- Allow your child to help at home or assign responsibilities such as putting away dishes, feeding the pet, assisting younger siblings, or setting the table.
- Attend important events like parent/teacher meetings, back-to-school nights, musical recitals/concerts, school plays, and athletic competitions.
- Display your child's work and share it with family members.
- Encourage and acknowledge efforts and achievements such as learning to read, behaving appropriately, communicating, thinking of others, completing homework and projects, problem-solving, and keeping room clean.

14 to 18 years:

- Assign household responsibilities like helping with laundry or cooking simple meals.
- Celebrate special accomplishments such as receiving a driver's permit or making an athletic team.
- Attend important events like back-to-school nights, musical recitals/concerts, school plays, and athletic competitions.
- Acknowledge efforts and achievements such as finding and maintaining work, making healthy decisions, or financial management.

When praising your children, reassure them that they are special regardless of their performance or physical appearance.

When disciplining your child, focus on the unacceptable behavior without criticizing your child.

★ LONG-TERM EFFECTS

- When children feel confident to express their opinions, they can develop an open communication with their parents.
- High self-esteem can help your children hold firmly to their values and beliefs when they are faced with peer pressure.
- Helping children recognize and appreciate their uniqueness teaches them to respect the differences of others.
- Avoiding comparisons to siblings and peers encourages children to have healthy relationships with others, without feelings of jealousy and anger.

Make efforts to attend your children's important events. Seeing their parents at these events will make them feel valued.

As a caution, do not overuse recognition and ignore inappropriate behavior in an effort to build self-esteem. This may promote uncooperative behavior.



I
LOVE
YOU

TO LEARN MORE

BOOKS FOR CHILDREN

IT'S OKAY TO BE DIFFERENT

Todd Parr

I LIKE MYSELF!

Karen Beaumont, illustrated by David Catrow

BOOKS FOR ADULTS

BECOMING THE PARENT YOU WANT TO BE

Laura Davis & Janis Keyser

HOW TO DEVELOP SELF-ESTEEM IN YOUR CHILD

Bettie B. Youngs, Ph.D., Ed.D.

ORGANIZATIONS

KIDSHEALTH www.kidshealth.org