

Top Tips for Building Self-esteem

Help Your Child Identify Their Strengths

Sit down with your child and help them make a list of all the things they're good at and all the things that are good about them. Put the list somewhere visible and ask family and friends to add to the list when they visit. Pick a different strength each week to focus on. When you notice your child demonstrating that strength, tell them.

Spend Quality Time with Your Child

Show your child you love them by making time for them. Set aside regular blocks of quality time. Put away your mobile phone, turn off the TV and give your child your undivided attention. Let your child direct the play by allowing them to choose the activity you will do together. Try to make your time together as positive as possible. Give your child lots of positive feedback and avoid criticising your child, giving commands, or asking too many questions.

Let Your Child Make Decisions

When you allow your child to make their own decisions it shows them you have confidence in them which is an important building block for self-esteem. It won't always be possible, but where you can give your child a choice – for example, 'would you like to wear your blue shorts or your red shorts'. When your child's choice conflicts with your preference, take a second to think about what's more important in the situation you're in – your child feeling confident and happy that you trusted them to make a decision or things getting done the way you'd like them to be done.

Be Your Child's Sounding Board

Solving your child's problems for them will help to alleviate their distress more quickly, but it won't help your child to build the skills they need to solve their own problems in the future. Avoid rushing in with all the answers and give your child the space to think through their own problems. Ask questions like 'what do you think we can do to fix that?' and try to prompt your child to generate their own solutions. Knowing they have the skills to solve their own problems will help your child to feel more confident.

Encourage Involvement in Activities

Having friends and experiencing success in social situations will help your child to feel happy and confident. Encourage your child to be involved in extracurricular activities both through school and outside of school. Mastering new skills will help to build your child's self-esteem and it will also give them the confidence to try new things. If your child excels in their activities praise this, but make sure you praise effort over achievement.

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Self-Esteem

Self-esteem is how we think and feel about ourselves and our perception of our own self-worth.

Children with healthy self-esteem feel good about themselves, have the confidence to try new things, and are more able to cope with set-backs and challenges. They also:

- Are more optimistic
- Enjoy making new friends
- Are solution focused and don't give up
- Know their strengths
- Feel confident to assert their needs
- Can make decisions independently
- Are more protected against anxiety and low mood

In contrast, kids with low self-esteem:

- Dislike trying new things
- Are overly critical of themselves
- Can only see what they're not good at
- Have a pessimistic view of the world
- Can't see why others value their friendship
- Have a low tolerance for challenging situations and give up easily

Children aren't born with healthy self-esteem but it's something that can be learnt with the right tools and strategies.

If your child lacks confidence it might be worthwhile seeking the guidance of a child clinical psychologist.

Building self-esteem can help your child cope with life challenges, and increase their resilience against emotional problems later in life.