

Primary Behaviour Support for Parents

Working to build your child's self-esteem is one of the best ways you can spend your time as a parent. And although it may take a little extra effort sometimes, you will be setting your kids up for success now and in the future.

But just as you don't expect your kids to be perfect, don't expect perfection from yourself either. You may not get it right all the time, and that's OK. As long as you're consistently trying to share love and positivity, you will be building confidence in them despite a mistake here or there.

Confidence shapes a child's life tremendously, and it's one of the most important gifts parents can give to their children. If you're unsure where to start, pick a few strategies from this list to try implementing. Once you've mastered those, try a few more.

Give your children opportunities to feel capable and competent, and demonstrate through words and actions that they are loved and valued.

Simple ways to boost your child's self esteem



Self-esteem is how a person feels about themselves.

A positive sense of self is one of the greatest gifts you can give your child. Children with high self-esteem feel loved and competent and develop into happy, productive people.

There are many pressures that can affect your child's self-esteem, for example: social media, bullying, exams, family problems and abuse.

Children and young people with high self-esteem often:

- Have a positive image of themselves
- Are confident
- Can make friends easily and are not anxious with new people
- Can play in groups or on their own
- Will try and solve problems on their own, but if not able to will ask for help
- Can be proud of their achievements
- Can admit mistakes and learn from them
- Will try new things and adapt to change



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Children and young people with low self-esteem often:

- Have a negative image of themselves, they might feel bad, ugly, unlikable or stupid
- Lack confidence
- Find it hard to make and keep friendships, and may feel victimised by others
- Feel lonely and isolated
- Tend to avoid new things and find change hard
- Can't deal well with failure
- Tend to put themselves down and might say things like "I'm stupid" or "I can't do that"
- Are not proud of what they achieve and always think they could have done better
- Are constantly comparing themselves to their peers in a negative way

Most children will have dips in self-esteem as they go through different stages or challenges in life.

Starting a new school, moving to a new house, changes in the family and many other factors can affect a child's confidence, but with support from parents and other adults they usually get through this.

Here are some small but significant ways you can impact your child's self-esteem in a positive way each day.

Show unconditional love.

Physical affection communicates love, acceptance, and belonging, making children happy and confident. Shower them with hugs, give high fives, back pats, hair tousles etc. to show that they are cared for and valued.

Hug your child when you say goodbye, snuggle together and read a book, and express your love every single day. As your kids grow, this foundation of love will help them as they continue to build their own social circles, make friends, and form bonds with teammates.

Play together and have fun.

When you play with your child, it shows them that you like spending time with them and that you value their company. If time together is difficult to find due to work pressures etc. make a weekly special time together or allocate 20 minutes each day to chat, laugh, and do something together.

Love and acceptance are key components of confidence and self-worth, so parents should spend quality time with their children to demonstrate that they are valuable. Take them on outings, eat dinner together, play games, go outside, or do any other activity that allows you and your child to enjoy time together.

To help your child feel valued and confident, set aside time to put away the electronics, put thoughts of work or other distractions out of your mind, and truly focus your attention on your child.

Do give children choices.

Giving children choices - within a reasonable set of options preselected by you - makes them feel empowered.

For example, at breakfast you might offer your child the option of eggs or pancakes. Learning to make simple choices while they are young will help prepare your child for the more difficult choices they will face as they grow.

Don't do everything for them.

Be patient and let them work things out for themselves. For example, it may be faster and easier to dress your Reception child but letting him/her do it themselves helps develop new skills.

The more they meet new challenges, the more competent and confident they will feel.

Do let them know no one is perfect.

And explain that no one expects them to be. The way you react to your child's mistakes and disappointments colours the way they will react. Emphasize the fact that being human means making mistakes and not being perfect.

Teach your child to view setbacks as opportunities for improvement and growth. Be patient with your child when they make mistakes. And, if you find that they tend to act out at school or experience behaviour problems, do what you can to turn those situations into opportunities for growth.

Doing so, will help build your child's confidence and demonstrate that making mistakes is not the end of the world as long as they address it in a healthy way. Challenge them when they criticise themselves, so that they start saying things like, "yes I can do this," instead of "I can't do this".

Ask them for their advice or opinion.

Ask children for their advice or opinions on age-appropriate situations to show that you value them and their ideas.

This also helps children build confidence by demonstrating that even adults need help sometimes, and it's okay to ask for it.

Don't gush or offer insincere praise.

Kids are masters at detecting insincere praise or baseless compliments. Praise your child often but be specific in your compliments so your words don't ring hollow.

For instance, instead of reacting to your child's latest drawing with, "Wow, that's great. You're the best artist in the world," try something like, "I really like how you drew the whole family. You even included details like Daddy's beard." Let them overhear you speaking positively about them to others.

Another quick, easy way to boost a child's confidence is to "accidentally" let him/her hear you praising his/her great achievements and efforts to others.



Self-Esteem

Do assign age-appropriate household jobs.

Give children responsibility for tasks such as setting the table, walking the dog, and folding clean washing. They'll increase their feelings of competency and bolster their problem-solving skills.

Having chores and responsibilities also gives kids a sense of control over their lives.

If some things around them are unpredictable, having responsibility over small jobs around the house can go a long way in building confidence and resilience

Don't draw comparisons between your children.

Instead, appreciate each one's individuality and special gifts.

Listen and encourage them to express their feelings.

When you criticize or overlook a child's feelings, they may feel that their emotions don't matter and conclude that this means they don't matter either. Encourage children to express both positive and negative emotions and help them talk through these emotions in a healthy manner.

Take what they say seriously. Listening to and valuing what they say, without judging their feelings, in turn makes them feel valued. Regularly ask how they're doing so they get used to talking about their feelings and know there's always someone to listen if they want it.

Refrain from Insulting Your Child.

When your child does something that drives you crazy or misbehaves, be sure to separate the behaviour from your child. You're human-when your child pushes your buttons you'll probably be irritated or even angry.

Experiencing these feelings is completely normal, but don't engage in name-calling or shame your child. Make it clear that it's the child's choices or actions that you're upset with, not who the child is as a person. Instead, talk to your child with respect. Don't shout. Take the emotion out of your discipline.

A good way to do this is by using natural and logical consequences and speaking to your child in a pleasant and friendly tone.

Watch Technology Use.

All this connectivity is both a good thing and a bad thing. It's positive because people can be more productive and stay connected to others from the comfort and safety of their homes.

But this online activity can come at a cost if it interferes with family relationships and communication. Likewise, too much screen time can impact physical activity. As a family, decide what type of online activity is necessary and what is purely entertainment.

Then devise a plan where you all learn to balance your daily screen time with healthy activities like going for walks, riding bikes, reading, and playing games together.



Let Them Create and Show Off Work.

Let your child display their work around the house. When they create artwork, write a story, or put together a project for school, invite your child to tell you about their work.

Ask what they want people to think or feel and what they like best about their creations. Giving children a chance to show off what they make or to talk about the things they create lets them know that their hard work is worthy of attention. It also communicates that their opinions and thoughts matter.

Encourage them to try new things to develop new skills.

Children who lack confidence often shy away from trying new things or tackling new challenges. Encourage your children to branch out, try new activities, join clubs and develop new skills.

This gives kids the confidence that they can tackle anything that comes their way. It's also important for kids to discover their interests and passions. When children find what they like and excel at, they gain confidence in themselves and their abilities.

Create opportunities for your children to try activities that interest them and be supportive of these endeavours. Help them set goals and make plans for things they'd like to accomplish. Keeping track builds good feelings about each milestone achieved.

Get them involved with voluntary or community projects

That make a difference to someone else to develop a more positive opinion of themselves

Appreciate effort no matter if they win or lose.

When you're growing up, the journey is more important than the destination. So, whether your child makes the winning goal for his team or accidentally kicks it out of bounds, applaud their effort.

They should never feel embarrassed for trying. Encourage them to try new challenges and celebrate them for it. Phrases like "Well done, that was hard, and you managed it," are good. Make the steps small at first, then increase the challenges.

Surround them with positive, confident people (including their friends).

The more a child is around positive, confident individuals, the likelier he is to become a confident and positive individual himself.

Give your child strong adult role models and do your best to ensure that their friends are confident people who uplift and encourage your child rather than tearing them down.

Set an example of having a positive attitude when faced with challenges.

Model how you deal with adversity and encourage and praise your child's resilience. Praise them when they deal with adversity.

Life is not fair. It's hard, and every child will have to learn that at some point.

Build positive routines.

Introduce structure around regular routines, healthy eating and exercise. A good night's sleep is also really important.

A healthy body helps children to have a healthy mind and routines and boundaries help them to feel safe and secure.

Focus on improving your own confidence.

This isn't a step you can accomplish overnight, but it's one of the most essential on this list. Parents are a child's first and best role models, so take time to repair your own confidence if needed.

Start by making positive comments about yourself and others in your child's presence.

Seek Help.

If you are worried your child's low self-esteem is affecting their day to day life, relationships or ability to learn and develop, it is worth seeking professional help. You can talk to your GP, and you can go without them if they would rather not come along with you.

It can be helpful to write down what makes you think your child has low self-esteem, and anything you think might be causing it.

