



Your Child's Self-Esteem

Sometimes it's easy to notice when kids seem to feel good about themselves — and when they don't. We often describe this idea of feeling good about ourselves as "self-esteem."

Kids with self-esteem:

- feel liked and accepted
- feel confident
- feel proud of what they can do
- think good things about themselves
- believe in themselves

Kids with low self-esteem:

- are self-critical and hard on themselves
- feel they're not as good as other kids
- think of the times they fail rather than when they succeed
- lack confidence
- doubt they can do things well

Why Self-Esteem Matters

Kids who feel good about themselves have the confidence to try new things. They are more likely to try their best. They feel proud of what they can do. Self-esteem helps kids cope with mistakes. It helps kids try again, even if they fail at first. As a result, self-esteem helps kids do better at school, at home, and with friends.

Kids with low self-esteem feel unsure of themselves. If they think others won't accept them, they may not join in. They may let others treat them poorly. They may have a hard time standing up for themselves. They may give up easily, or not try at all. Kids with low self-esteem find it hard to cope when they make a mistake, lose, or fail. As a result, they may not do as well as they could.

How Self-Esteem Develops

Self-esteem can start as early as babyhood. It develops slowly over time. It can start just because a child feels safe, loved, and accepted. It can start when a baby gets positive attention and loving care.

As babies become toddlers and young children, they're able to do some things all by themselves. They feel good about themselves when they can use their new skills. Their self-esteem grows when parents pay attention, let a child try, give smiles, and show they're proud.

As kids grow, self-esteem can grow too. Any time kids try things, do things, and learn things can be a chance for self-esteem to grow. This can happen when kids:

- make progress toward a goal
- learn things at school
- make friends and get along
- learn skills — music, sports, art, cooking, tech skills
- practice favorite activities
- help, give, or be kind
- get praise for good behaviors
- try hard at something
- do things they're good at and enjoy
- are included by others
- feel understood and accepted
- get a prize or a good grade they know they've earned

When kids have self-esteem, they feel confident, capable, and accepted for who they are.

How Parents Can Build Self-Esteem

Every child is different. Self-esteem may come easier to some kids than others. And some kids face things that can lower their self-esteem. But even if a child's self-esteem is low, it can be raised.

Here are things parents can do to help kids feel good about themselves:

Help your child learn to do things. At every age, there are new things for kids to learn. Even during babyhood, learning to hold a cup or take first steps sparks a sense of mastery and delight. As your child grows, things like learning to dress, read, or ride a bike are chances for self-esteem to grow.

When teaching kids how to do things, show and help them at first. Then let them do what they can, even if they make mistakes. Be sure your child gets a chance to learn, try, and feel proud. Don't make new challenges too easy — or too hard.

Praise your child, but do it wisely. Of course, it's good to praise kids. Your praise is a way to show that you're proud. But some ways of praising kids can actually backfire.

Here's how to do it right:

- **Don't overpraise.** Praise that doesn't feel earned doesn't ring true. For example, telling a child he played a great game when he knows he didn't feels hollow and fake. It's better to say, "I know that wasn't your best game, but we all have off days. I'm proud of you for not giving up." Add a vote of confidence: "Tomorrow, you'll be back on your game."
- **Praise effort.** Avoid focusing praise only on results (such as getting an A) or fixed qualities (such as being smart or athletic).

Instead, offer most of your praise for effort, progress, and attitude. For example: "You're working hard on that project," "You're getting better and better at these spelling tests," or "I'm proud of you for practicing piano — you've really stuck with it." With this kind of praise, kids put effort into things, work toward goals, and try. When kids do that, they're more likely to succeed.

Be a good role model. When you put effort into everyday tasks (like raking the leaves, making a meal, cleaning up the dishes, or washing the car), you're setting a good example. Your child learns to put effort into doing homework, cleaning up toys, or making the bed.

Modeling the right attitude counts too. When you do tasks cheerfully (or at least without grumbling or complaining), you teach your child to do the same. When you avoid rushing through chores and take pride in a job well done, you teach your child to do that too.

Ban harsh criticism. The messages kids hear about themselves from others easily translate into how they feel about themselves. Harsh words ("You're so lazy!") are harmful, not motivating. When kids hear negative messages about themselves, it harms their self-esteem. Correct kids with patience. Focus on what you want them to do next time. When needed, show them how.

Focus on strengths. Pay attention to what your child does well and enjoys. Make sure your child has chances to develop these strengths. Focus more on strengths than weaknesses if you want to help kids feel good about themselves. This improves behavior too.

Let kids help and give. Self-esteem grows when kids get to see that what they do matters to others. Kids can help out at home, do a service project at school, or do a favor for a sibling. Helping and kind acts build self-esteem and other good feelings.

Reviewed by: D'Arcy Lyness, PhD
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Post Test – July 2023

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1. We often describe this idea of feeling good about ourselves as _____ - _____.
2. Self-esteem helps kids cope with _____. It helps kids try again, even if they fail at first.
3. Kids with low self-esteem find it easy to cope when they make a mistake, lose or fail.
True or False?
4. Children's self-esteem grows when parents _____, let a child try, give smiles and show they're proud.
5. As your child grows, things like learning to dress, read or ride a bike are _____ for self-esteem to grow.
6. Avoid focusing praise only on results, instead offer most of your praise for effort, progress and _____.
7. Be a good role model. When you put effort into everyday tasks you are setting a good example and your child learns to put effort into their tasks.
True or False?
8. Ban harsh criticism. When kids hear _____ messages about themselves, it harms their self-esteem. Correct kids with patience.
9. Pay attention to what your child does well and enjoys. Make sure your child has chances to develop these _____.
10. Let kids help and give. Helping and kind acts build self-esteem and other _____.

June 2023 Quiz Answers. 1.Mood 2.Chemicals/Anxiety 3.True 4.Alzheimer's
5.Aerobic 6.Stronger 7.False 8.Flexible 9.Disabilities 10.60



Southwest Human Development Services
P.O. Box 28487 • Austin, Texas 78755-8487
(512) 467-7916 • Toll Free (800) 369-9082
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