

# PARENTAL SELF-ESTEEM

The self-worth of parents is often unrealistically linked to children's behaviour or level of achievement

The development of healthy self-esteem is as important for parents as it is for children.

If children or young people are poorly behaved or experiencing difficulties at school, parents often think that this somehow reflects on them.

Some children are difficult to manage, while others, having minds of their own, may not put in the required effort at school despite your best efforts to motivate or help them get organised.

In many ways it is unhealthy to link our self-esteem to the behaviour or achievements of our children. We become too reliant on them. We need to focus on our own efforts as parents and forgive ourselves for not always 'getting things right.'

It's easy to become discouraged, particularly if you feel isolated or if you raise children on your own.

## BOOSTING YOUR OWN SELF-ESTEEM

### HERE ARE SOME IDEAS TO HELP YOU BOOST YOUR OWN SELF-ESTEEM AS A PARENT:

**1. Check your expectations of your children.** If you, like most parents, had high aspirations for your children before you began a family you may discover that reality is quite different – particularly as children become adolescents. They may not always be angels or be the academic or sports stars that you hoped

for. Adjust your expectations in line with reality – your own and your children's self-esteem will benefit.

### **2. Positive feedback is essential.**

It is helpful to hear how well you are fulfilling your parental role from your partner and for you to give this encouragement, too. If there is no one around who can reinforce your positive aspects as a parent then provide yourself with feedback. Make a list of all the positive or useful things that you have done as a parent each day. The length of the list can be astounding!

### **3. Seek out positive people and stay away from critics and pessimists.**

Attitudes are catching – so if you constantly mix with people who criticise children and parents then you will soon adopt the same attitudes to yourself and your kids.

### **4. Children can be a terrific source of encouragement but they first must hear it from you.**

If you show appreciation for their help, take pleasure from their triumphs, display confidence in them and concentrate on their strengths, they will learn both to encourage themselves and to build up the self-worth of others – including their parents.

### **5. Develop positive self-talk.**

Remind yourself constantly that you are doing a good job and that parenting is

a worthwhile task requiring a myriad of skills. Sometimes we lose perspective and little problems seem bigger than what they really are.

**6. Don't compare your children to others.** We all do it – that is, compare our children's behaviour, school progress and even sporting and artistic abilities with that of other children the same age. It is as if we need a benchmark however it is generally an exercise in lowering our own self-esteem as parents as there will always be children who are better than our own in whatever areas we value.

**7. Avoid catastrophising about your children.** Be specific about how you describe events or people. 'My kids are difficult to get off to school in the morning' rather than 'my children are rotten'. Usually things are never as bad as they first seem.

**8. Most importantly, do something for yourself regularly.** Many parents put their lives on hold when they have children and have little in their own lives that actually sustains them as people. If this sounds like you then do yourself and your kids a favour and put yourself first on a regular basis.



Parenting *ideas*  
MICHAEL GROSE