

# SELF-ESTEEM

The way we interact with children on a daily basis influences the positive picture that they construct of themselves

Self-esteem refers to the image or picture that each of us carries around in our heads. This image or picture is constructed through our experiences and is strongly influenced by the messages that others send.

Children's feelings of self-worth or self-esteem influence their happiness, success at school and the way they relate with others. Their self-esteem is influenced by their experiences of success and the messages they receive from those around them. Children with a healthy level of self-esteem usually take sensible risks and extend themselves more, as they have a realistic view of mistakes. Failure doesn't reflect on them personally, they are still OK and they won't fall part when things don't go their way. Children with a healthy self-esteem tend to be more resilient and cope better with problems and any changes that may occur.

While children have countless experiences in settings outside their home and receive messages from many sources including their peers it is parents that have the greatest influence on the way children see themselves. In fact, when children are very young their sense of self is linked to their parents so a parent's self-esteem is obviously an important determinant in a child's self-esteem.

Parents can influence children's self-esteem by helping them experience success, no matter how small and by

sending positive, realistic messages about them and their abilities.

## ESTEEM-BUILDING IDEAS

**HERE ARE SOME SIMPLE STRATEGIES YOU CAN USE EVERY DAY TO ENHANCE YOUR CHILD'S SELF-ESTEEM AND SENSE OF WORTH:**

- 1. Develop independence in children.** Allow children to do things for themselves as soon as they are able. This sends a powerful message that you think that they are capable and able to take some control over their world.
- 2. Celebrate children's efforts and achievements.** Have a display space at home for schoolwork, art and awards they have received. Change the display frequently and make sure that each child's efforts are represented.
- 3. Send frequent positive messages to children.** Focus on their strengths rather than criticising weaknesses and continually pointing out misbehaviour. When providing feedback mention a strength first – 'Jeremiah, I like the way you put expression in your

voice when you read. Now let's work on some of these words you are having trouble with'.

**4. Value your children's ideas, thoughts and opinions.** Listen to them and help them to express their feelings and thoughts. Accept rather than reject their ideas even though you may disagree with them.

**5. Help children experience success by breaking complex tasks into achievable goals.** For instance, a young child can learn to make a bed by first arranging teddies, smoothing the doona and progressing from there.

**6. Teach children to establish realistic goals.** For instance, if they wish to learn to cook they may set out to learn ten recipes in a year. Help them make up a plan of action to achieve their goals.



**Parenting**ideas  
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