



CHILDREN'S
HOME
SOCIETY OF
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C H I L D R E N ' S H O M E S O C I E T Y O F C A L I F O R N I A

SELF-ESTEEM

BUILDING A CHILD'S CONFIDENCE AND SUCCESS



Self-esteem is how you think and feel about yourself. As children grow and develop, they form opinions about themselves through the words and actions of other people. By providing a loving and caring environment, parents and caregivers can positively shape a child's self-image.



Children with a high level of self-esteem feel good about themselves, which helps them maintain a positive attitude toward different circumstances. Low self-esteem can cause a child to feel insecure, fearful, and anxious. As a parent or caretaker, you play an important role in helping children develop the self-confidence needed to succeed in many aspects of their lives.



★ LEVELS OF SELF-ESTEEM

How a child acts and reacts to different situations provides information about their level of self-esteem. By recognizing signs of low and high self-esteem, parents and caregivers can appropriately meet each child's needs and promote self-confidence.

Signs of Low Self-Esteem:

- Avoids new and unfamiliar experiences and situations
- Undervalues their own abilities
- Blames others for their mistakes
- Can be easily influenced by others
- May become quickly frustrated
- Tends to be defensive and sensitive about criticism
- Continually wishes to change their appearance
- Lacks social involvement (for example: not raising their hand, not participating in discussions)

Signs of High Self-Esteem:

- Approaches new situations and challenges eagerly
- Feels proud of their achievements
- Learns from their own mistakes
- Accepts helpful criticism
- Confident about their appearance

Remember that children do not think and act as adults do. Set realistic expectations for them and avoid excessive or unhelpful criticism.

★ EFFECTS ON CHILDREN

A child's level of self-esteem affects different aspects of their life and personality. A child who lacks self-confidence tends to fear new environments and opportunities, thereby limiting themselves and their abilities. A confident child is more likely to approach situations with a positive and open attitude. Some areas of a child's life that may be affected are:

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| - Relationships with others | - Approach to new situations |
| - Attitude | - Creativity |
| - Ability to make healthy decisions | - Response to peer pressure |
| - Problem-solving skills | - Ability to reach goals |
| - Energy level | - Success at school |



★ CULTIVATING HIGH SELF-ESTEEM

Children's views of themselves are shaped by what they hear and experience as they grow.

Adults can help children build a strong sense of confidence by:

- Helping them recognize and appreciate their uniqueness (for example: heritage, special talents)
- Being a model of self-confidence through your own words, actions, and attitude
- Communicating unconditional love
- Acknowledging and encouraging children's efforts
- Avoiding comparisons to siblings, friends, or peers
- Allowing children to make their own decisions and act independently, even if they make mistakes, as long as they are safe (for example: choosing outfits, putting on clothes, tying shoes, feeding themselves)
- Using positive and encouraging language

★ BE PRESENT WITH YOUR CHILDREN

Being present in your child's daily life can reassure them that you love and value them. Being available and spending time with your child shows them they are important. Express your love and appreciation daily by talking, playing, and showing affection. Be involved by creating opportunities for your child to be successful at developing new skills and tasks. More specifically, for different ages:

Birth to five years:

- Encourage and acknowledge growth and development, such as laughing, rolling over, crawling, sitting up, walking, playing with toys and putting them away, using a spoon, drinking from a cup, using words to express thoughts and feelings, and cooperating with others
- Give attention to emotional and physical needs
- Hang up drawings, artwork, and other accomplishments
- Allow your child to help with household chores like setting the table or putting away laundry

When praising children, be specific so that they know what they did well: "You did a wonderful job folding the laundry!"

6 to 13 years:

- Celebrate special accomplishments. For example, student of the month, learning to swim, learning to ride a bicycle, or improving grades at school
- Allow your child to help at home or assign responsibilities such as putting away dishes, feeding the pet, assisting younger siblings, or setting the table
- Attend important events like parent/teacher meetings, back-to-school nights, musical recitals/concerts, school plays, and athletic competitions
- Display your child's work and share it with family members
- Encourage and acknowledge efforts and achievements such as learning to read, behaving appropriately, communicating, thinking of others, completing homework and projects, problem-solving, and keeping their room clean

When disciplining your child, focus on the challenging behavior without criticism.

14 to 18 years:

- Assign household responsibilities like helping with laundry or cooking simple meals
- Celebrate special accomplishments such as receiving a driver's permit or joining an athletic team
- Attend important events like back-to-school nights, music recitals/concerts, school plays, and athletic competitions
- Acknowledge efforts and achievements such as finding and maintaining work, making healthy decisions, or managing finances

★ LONG-TERM EFFECTS

- When children feel confident enough to express their opinions, they are more likely to develop open communication with their family
- High self-esteem can help your children hold firmly to their values and beliefs when faced with peer pressure
- Helping children recognize and appreciate their uniqueness teaches them to respect the differences of others
- Avoiding comparisons to siblings and peers encourages children to have healthy relationships with others, without experiencing feelings of jealousy and anger

Make efforts to attend your children's important events. Seeing their family at these events will make them feel valued.



When children encounter challenges, remind them of their past successes to inspire confidence and resilience.

TO LEARN MORE

BOOKS FOR CHILDREN

IT'S OKAY TO BE DIFFERENT

Todd Parr

I LIKE MYSELF!

Karen Beaumont, illustrated by David Catrow

BOOKS FOR ADULTS

BECOMING THE PARENT YOU WANT TO BE

Laura Davis & Janis Keyser

HOW TO DEVELOP SELF-ESTEEM IN YOUR CHILD

Bettie B. Youngs, Ph.D., Ed.D.

ORGANIZATIONS

KIDSHEALTH www.kidshealth.org