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# Raising emotionally HEALTHY CHILDREN

**B**UILDING your child's self-esteem is one of the most important things you can do as a parent. When you start with these positive changes, it will stick with your child for their entire life.

The early childhood years are a critical time in the formation of self-esteem. During these first years, children form impressions of their capabilities and self-worth based on their successes and the feedback they receive.

## INDEPENDENCE

In order to develop a healthy self-esteem, a child needs to learn how to do things on his own. Parents can help a child accomplish difficult tasks, set challenging, yet realistic, goals and offer encouragement to meet those goals.

As a child grows, parents should step back to let him solve problems and complete tasks on his own. A child will have many chances to learn how to be independent and competent as he grows.

Parents should allow as much freedom as possible and only step in when the child is getting overly frustrated.

## SPECIAL GIFTS

A healthy self-esteem will flourish as a child develops his own special gifts. To build confidence and self-esteem, a school-aged child can be given chores and allowed to participate in age-appropriate activities that spark his interest.

Chores allow a child to contribute to the home and family in a positive way. Activities

## CHALLENGES

Children with a strong sense of self-worth are able to take on challenges, believe in their ability to be successful, and see setbacks as temporary situations that can be overcome.

Children with poor self-image are easily discouraged, lack initiative to begin daunting tasks and see obstacles as defeating and permanent.

## PRAISE AND ENCOURAGEMENT

Self-esteem begins at a child's earliest memories. The things you say and do to your children will have a huge impact on your children for the rest of their lives. Children

This will help him build confidence that he needs later in life for everything that he tries to do.

## CRITICISM

Criticism should always be constructive and you should remind your child of their positive traits and abilities and of how much you love them even when you have to scold or correct them.

Encouragement will go a long way to helping your child's self-esteem. Encouragement can make a shy child come out of his shell and try something new.



## RESPONSIBLE PARENTING

Be conscious and aware of what is said to a

...the and family in a positive way. Activities that are challenging, but doable, give a child a sense of pride and a chance to set achievable goals.

The self-esteem of peer-oriented children will always be dependent on the way others perceive them. A positive self-esteem means that children and teens consider themselves to be valuable even when they are being judged by others.



...thrive on praise.

You can never "spoil" a child with praise. You should always offer praise to your child for a job well done.

No feat or activity is too small for praise and encouragement. Your child needs to know that you are there always, that you love him and that you believe in him.

## ONGOING DEVELOPMENT

Fostering and building a children's self-esteem is an ongoing job for a parent, one that begins at birth and continues through childhood and into adulthood. A child with a healthy self-esteem will have confidence in himself and his abilities. Self-esteem can serve as a protective armour that helps a child grow and get through the turbulent adolescent years to become a successful, confident adult.

If the seeds of self-esteem are not planted in a child when they are young, it can be very difficult to develop later in life.

- **Be conscious and aware of what is said to a child.** Children tend to hang on the words of their parents, and words can often linger in either a positive or negative way. Praising a child will help them develop a confident self-esteem and feel good about themselves, while putdowns can leave them questioning their abilities and not feeling confident.
- **Watch your own behaviour and action as a role model.** Children learn from the behaviours and actions of their parents. It is better to show an optimistic attitude around the child, as the child will mirror that behaviour.
- **Show an abundance of affection toward the child.** Children respond well to love. They thrive on being hugged and shown warmth. Love and appreciation goes a long way towards nurturing a positive and healthy self-esteem.
- **Make sure the home life environment is safe.** A child that does not feel they are going home to a safe environment will be more anxious. When children observe parents fighting and arguing, they tend to become depressed and withdrawn.
- **As the child grows older, encourage him to become part of a volunteer programme.** This allows the child to be placed in the position to do good things for others and feeling affirmed for the good job they do. Exposure to positive feedback will nurture their self-esteem.