

## Self-Esteem

Your child's positive self-esteem is essential for healthy development. It significantly affects his/her social, emotional, and mental well-being. Teaching your child to have self-respect and to like himself or herself is important in establishing interpersonal relationships with family, friends, and significant others. At an early age, you can help mold your child's positive sense of self. You can begin by focusing on the achievements or the positive qualities about your son or daughter and by sharing these with him/her. Defining self-esteem for your child and having him/her list or draw his/her good qualities and ways for self-improvement is also a good start. Understanding your child's capabilities and individual interests is also important. As a parent, you must set reasonable goals for your child so that he/she will be able to set reasonable expectations for him/herself. Reasonable goal setting allows your child to make correct choices when faced with future challenges such as peer pressure. Consequently, your child will avoid attributing failure to personal inadequacy, guilt, or lack of ability. As a parent, you should be supportive and not too overprotective, while maintaining reasonable expectations of your child and his/ her abilities. Allow your child self-exploration so he/she can develop a positive sense of self, confidence, and independence.

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Self-esteem is the way we feel about ourselves. If your child has positive self-esteem, it means they feel good about themselves, whereas if they don't feel good about themselves, they have negative self-esteem. Help your children develop positive self- concepts because it has a significant impact on the way they approach life and the choices they make.

### **ACTIVITY #1: " All About Me "**

Have your child produce an " ALL ABOUT ME " booklet, and have each page filled with information all about him/ her. Each page should focus on your child's inner gratification. Examples include: "Where I like to eat...", "Where I want to go for vacation...", "What I would like for a gift..."

### **ACTIVITY #2: " Who Am I Collage"**

Have your child cut pictures and word phrases out of magazines that represent his/ her personal interests and abilities. Your child can paste them to form a collage on a large piece of construction paper or poster board. Ask your child to explain his/ her collage to you and the family, discussing why certain pictures or words were chosen.

### **ACTIVITY #3: " Self-Esteem Questionnaire"**

Have your child answer these questions to the best of his/ her ability. Talk about his/ her answers.

1. Describe at least three things you like about yourself.
2. Who are some of the people in your life who make you feel good about yourself and describe what they do to make you feel this way.
3. Discuss some of the things that you do or have done in the past that give you a sense of achievement or accomplishment.
4. Rate each of the following factors on a scale of 1 to 5 (1 being very weak and 5 very strong) to represent how important you think these things are to your own feelings of positive self- esteem:

Family's income \_\_\_\_\_  
Clothing I wear \_\_\_\_\_  
Grades I make \_\_\_\_\_  
Car we drive \_\_\_\_\_  
My religion \_\_\_\_\_  
Helping others \_\_\_\_\_  
Our neighborhood \_\_\_\_\_  
Friends I have \_\_\_\_\_  
Parent/Family support \_\_\_\_\_  
House I live in \_\_\_\_\_  
Activities I participate in \_\_\_\_\_  
Other: \_\_\_\_\_

*Adapted from PE Central Health Lesson Plan Ideas, Self Esteem Assessment Sheet*

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## How Can You Make Your Children Feel Special?

### **You can build your child's self-esteem in many ways:**

- ~ Communicating often and openly.
- ~ Discipline in a way that teaches as well as enforces.
- ~ Offering opportunities to make choices and decisions.
- ~ Providing chances to succeed in school, sports, or hobbies.
- ~ Teaching healthy habits and respect for one's body.

- **Build Communication.** Paving a two-way street of communication with your young child can smooth the sometimes bumpy road of growing up, enabling you to share the triumphs as well as the trials. Review our tips on how to [establish healthy communication with your children](#).
- **Acknowledge feelings.** Even a simple "I see" or "Mmmm" lets your child know you understand how he feels, even if you don't agree. Help him name his feelings. "You must have been really embarrassed," or "It sounds like that really made you angry."
- **Let your child know he's special.** Sometimes a smile, a pat or a hug says more than words. The supply is unlimited, so be generous. Even if you're not together, you can still stay in touch. Write notes to each other.
- **Praise frequently.** Praise reinforces good behavior. Don't forget to praise the effort, especially for young children. Don't expect perfect results. "Raking those leaves sure was difficult; you really worked hard." Praise qualities such as kindness or creativity, not just deeds.
- **Remember, words can hurt.** Criticism, sarcasm, threats, and teasing can deflate a child's confidence and make her feel small and powerless. Use words to build up, not tear down, your child.

- **Give your child the freedom to choose.** Making choices about everyday things, such as clothes, breakfast cereal, and when to take out the trash is good practice for more serious decisions later on. It also gives them a sense of control. Living with consequences is also important: If your son postpones homework until after dinner, he won't have time for TV too.
- **Confess your own mistakes.** Mistakes are learning opportunities, and how you handle yours sends an important message to your child.
- **Say you're sorry.** Apologizing is not a sign of weakness - it is an acknowledgement of the hurt or inconvenience that you've caused another person and teaches your child to show concern for others.
- **Laugh a lot.** It's been said that laughter is the shortest distance between two people. Sharing a good laugh eases many tense situations.
- **Do activities.** Have your child draw self-portraits. Make him list his good qualities, his interests, what he likes to do with friends. Have him list ways he can improve overall as a person. Discuss hopes and expectations for the future.
- **Give children growing responsibility.** Assigning chores and making schedules with your children gives them a sense of responsibility and self-worth. Make them feel that they are contributing to the household.
- **Remember each child is unique.** Children are individually talented and interested in various activities. Observe your child's talents at an early age and get them involved in activities that expand these talents.
- **Don't compare children.** Don't compare your child with other children, especially siblings. This may trigger resentment between brothers and sisters, friends, and between you and your child. Don't expect or force one child to walk in the footsteps of another. Allow self-exploration while setting reasonable restrictions.
- **Teach respect for the body.** Remind your children, "Your body belongs to you!" A child with healthy self-esteem knows about his/ her body and how to take care of it. Teach your child ALL body parts when he/ she starts talking. A child who respects his/ her own body wants to take care of it. In the long- run, he/she will avoid risky behaviors that could cause harm or injury, and will make better choices.