



How to Help Children and Teens Develop Healthy Self-Esteem

Self-esteem is a major key to success in life. The development of a positive self-concept or healthy self-esteem is extremely important to the happiness and success of children and teenagers. This page will share the basics for helping kids and teens to improve their self-esteem. It will also point you to other CDI pages and CDI products that can help you to improve your child's or teenager's self-esteem.

Self-esteem is how we feel about ourselves, and our behavior clearly reflects those feelings. For example, a child or teen with high self-esteem will be able to:

- act independently
- assume responsibility
- take pride in his accomplishments
- tolerate frustration
- attempt new tasks and challenges
- handle positive and negative emotions
- offer assistance to others

On the other hand, a child with low self-esteem will:

- avoid trying new things
- feel unloved and unwanted
- blame others for his own shortcomings
- feel, or pretend to feel, emotionally indifferent
- be unable to tolerate a normal level of frustration
- put down his own talents and abilities
- be easily influenced

Parents, more than anyone else can promote their child's self-esteem. It isn't a particularly difficult thing to do. In fact, most parents do it without even realizing that their words and actions have great impact on how their child or teenager feels about himself. Here are some suggestions to keep in mind.

When you feel good about your child, mention it to him or her. Parents are often quick to express negative feelings to children but somehow don't get around to describing positive feelings. A child doesn't know when you are feeling good about him or her and he or she needs to hear you tell him or her that you like having him or her in the family. Children remember positive



statements we say to them. They store them up and “replay” these statements to themselves. Practice giving your child [words of encouragement](#) throughout each day.

Be generous with praise. Use what is called descriptive praise to let your child know when they are doing something well. You must of course become in the habit of looking for situations in which your child is doing a good job or displaying a talent. When your child completes a task or chore you could say, “I really like the way you straightened your room. You found a place for everything and put each thing in its place.” When you observe them showing a talent you might say, “That last piece you played was great. You really have a lot of musical talent.” Don’t be afraid to give praise often even in front of family or friends. Also, use praise to point out positive character traits. For instance, “You are a very kind person.” Or, “I like the way you stick with things you do even when it seems hard to do.” You can even praise a child for something he did not do such as “I really liked how you accepted my answer of ‘no’ and didn’t lose your temper.”

Teach your child to practice making positive self-statements. Self-talk is very important in everything we do. Psychologists have found that negative self-talk is behind depression and anxiety. What we think determines how we feel and how we feel determines how we behave. Therefore, it is important to teach children to be positive about how they “talk to themselves.” Some examples of useful self-talk are: “I can get this problem, if I just keep trying.” “It’s OK if our team lost today. We all tried our best and you can’t win them all.” “It makes me feel good to help others even if the person doesn’t notice or thank me.” Your child can become an expert at this by listening to [Self-Image for Children](#). It combines relaxation techniques along with positive self-statements and mental pictures to help kids develop their self-esteem.

Avoid criticism that takes the form of ridicule or shame. Sometimes it is necessary to criticize a child’s actions, and it is appropriate that parents do so. When, however the criticism is directed to the child as a person it can easily deteriorate into ridicule or shame. It is important to learn to use “I statements” rather than “You statements” when giving criticism. For instance say, “I would like you to keep your clothes in the proper place in your closet or drawers not lying all over your room;” rather than saying “Why are you such a lazy slob? Can’t you take care of anything?” Please refer to our page, [Guidelines for Good Communication With Children](#) for more suggestions. For detailed suggestions on how to get children to act



responsibly while achieving a good parent/child relationship, check out [Kid Cooperation](#).

Teach your child about decision-making and to recognize when he/she has made a good decision. Children make decisions all the time but often are not aware that they are doing so. There are a number of ways parents can help children improve their ability to consciously make wise decisions. Children make decisions all the time but often are not aware that they are doing so. There are a number of ways parents can help children improve their ability to consciously make wise decisions.

- Help the child clarify the problem that is creating the need for a decision. Ask him questions that pinpoint how he sees, hears, and feels about a situation and what may need to be changed.
- Brainstorm the possible solutions. Usually there is more than one solution or choice to a given dilemma, and the parent can make an important contribution by pointing out this fact and by suggesting alternatives if the child has none.
- Allow the child to choose one of the solutions only after fully considering the consequences. The best solution will be one that solves the problem and simultaneously makes the child feel good about himself or herself.
- Later join the child in evaluating the results of that particular solution. Did it work out well? Or did it fail? if so, why? Reviewing the tactics will equip the child to make a better decision the next time around.

Develop a positive approach to providing structure for your child. All kids and teens need to accept responsibility for their behavior. They should learn self-discipline. To help children learn self-discipline, the parent needs to adopt the role of coach/teacher rather than that of disciplinarian and punisher. Learn the “Three Fs” of positive parenting. (Discipline should be fair, firm and friendly).

https://childdevelopmentinfo.com/child-psychology/self-esteem/#.WR8P_5LyUk

