

Actions that may lower a child's self-esteem:

- Expecting too much or too little from your child.
- Yelling at or harshly criticizing him, especially in front of others.
- Treating your child's mistakes as failures.
- Overprotecting or neglecting your child so that she has no chance to fail—OR succeed.

Research shows that a single strong, positive adult influence in a child's life can be enough to keep him on track. Whether a parent, mentor, coach, big brother, or special friend, that person's influence can be crucial. Sometimes the positive influence of the model is not felt for months or years, so short-term evaluation misses the mark.

In general, positive self-esteem means that one feels more self-respect than self-hate, more hope than despair, more courage than fear, and more compassion than indifference. It provides the foundation for positive relationships throughout life.

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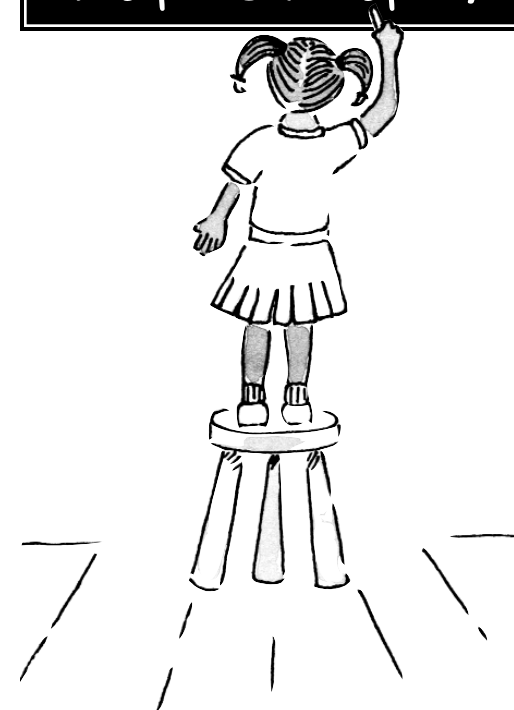
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TIPS FOR PARENTS

Helping Your Child Develop Positive Self-Esteem



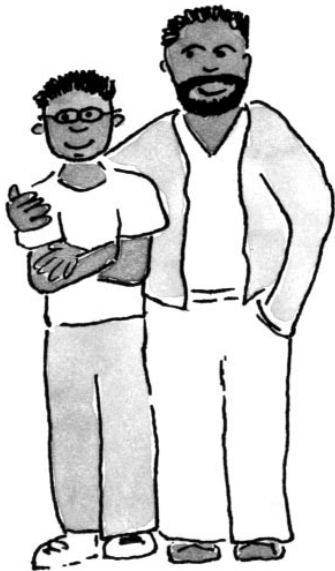
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Helping Your Child Develop Positive Self-Esteem

Self-esteem is the value we place on our own qualities. Children are not just born with good self-esteem. It grows from messages they get about themselves from family and others and the successes they experience.



Parents play the biggest role in shaping children's self-esteem. Parents should encourage children to feel good about themselves. Good self-esteem helps children perform better in school, learn social skills, build healthy relationships, and resist peer pressure to try drugs and alcohol.

When children are small, their families are their main source of feedback. By the teen years, however, friends are more important to

self-esteem than family. Supportive friends help teens believe that they can cope with pressure. Of course, even a supportive peer group can be antisocial, as in the case of street gangs. Strong self-esteem can be directed in positive or negative ways. Personal values and decision-making skills influence how children express their self-esteem.

Self-esteem is important for two reasons:

First, we usually act according to our beliefs and feelings about ourselves. If a child believes she is smart, for example, she studies and works the way a smart child does.

Second, our self-esteem colors the way we see the world around us. If a child has low self-esteem, he may feel negative about things that happen to him.

High self-esteem is based on four beliefs:

- Others care about me and accept me for who I am. Their caring has nurtured my self-respect. I am a *person*.
- Others love and cherish me. Their love has deepened my compassion for others. I am a *friend*.
- Others have encouraged me to look forward to the future. Their belief in me has nurtured my hope. I am forming a vision for my life. I am a *dreamer*.
- Others have helped me feel more competent. I am learning self-control and feeling my inner strength. Their guidance has nurtured my courage. I am a *champion*.

Person, Friend, Dreamer, Champion—four qualities that we can encourage as parents

through our acceptance, encouragement, empowerment, and love.

Ways to help your child build high self-esteem:

- Show interest in your child's activities, projects, and problems.
- Let your child know she is loved and wanted.



- Encourage her efforts enough that she feels capable. Don't praise so much that she becomes over-confident or stuck up.
- Let children know that mistakes are normal. Everyone (even adults) makes mistakes.
- Let your child know that you believe in him and expect him to do well.
- Set a good example by not criticizing yourself.
- Spend time every day talking to him about his concerns. Remember, if a child's life lacks positive influences, he may seek out negative ones.