

Help Your Child Develop a Positive Self-Concept

It is apparent that success in life is determined more by how a person feels about themselves than by talent or ability. Research reveals that successful students are aware of their worth and importance. These same students are the ones who are able to resist peer pressure and are less likely to become involved in socially unacceptable behaviors. A positive self-concept is mentioned frequently as one of the most important weapons against substance abuse.

All in all, the best approach to developing a positive self-concept for a student is a concentrated effort between parents and teachers. There are many things one can do to enhance a student's self-esteem. Some suggestions for parents are listed below.

EXPECTATIONS

- State rules clearly and enforce them. Define limits, but allow flexibility for children within these limits.
- Expectations for children should be reasonable and fit ability and age. Guide them in setting reasonable goals so they can achieve success.
- Children feel useful and valued if they have responsibilities.
- Children appreciate being kept informed of family matters and being made aware of family values. Children benefit from hearing descriptions of the experiences that have determined a family's values. The decisions made to accept certain beliefs and the reasons behind feelings are important lessons for children.

ACTIONS

- Discuss your children's activities and let them know that what they do is important to you. Attend games, parent day at school, drama presentations, award ceremonies, etc.
- Teach children to spend time/money wisely.
- It is extremely important to spend quality time together. Shared activities become favorite activities.
- Demonstrate how much you care. Hug them. Tell them and show them you love them and that they are terrific.

INTERACTIONS

- Give praise and recognition frequently. Reward children for a job well done. Emphasize the good things they do.
- Let children know that you have made mistakes, learned from them, and despite it all, you feel good about yourself. Be a good role model.
- Allow children to do as much as they can on their own, but give them encouragement and support when they need it.
- Look for solutions to problems without placing blame or commenting on a child's character. Let children know if there is a problem and encourage them to help figure out the best solution.
- Treat children as you would a good friend or as you like to be treated yourself. In communicating with your children, frequently use phrases that build self-esteem such as "Thank you. What a good idea! You did that well."

ATTITUDES

- Deal with emotions, ideas, and feelings seriously. Never belittle your children by making statements such as "You'll grow out of it." or "It's not as bad as you think."
- Emphasize the uniqueness and strengths of others. Help your children develop an appreciation for different backgrounds, cultures, and philosophies.

Enhance Your Child's Self-Concept

- Teach children how to say good things to themselves. Positive self-talk is a great self-esteem builder.
- Encourage your child to be responsible for a younger child. Younger children can profit from caring for pets.
- Self-esteem increases when one is involved in activities rather than being a spectator. Playing music, for example, builds self-concept more than just listening to music.
- Praise your children when you see them stop a bad behavior on their own. Self-esteem correlates with the ability to control one's behavior.
- Research reveals that physical activities (such as running or other forms of exercise) build self-esteem and can be used to counteract depression.
- Share with your children your own personal adversities. Give them specific examples of how you have failed and learned from your failures. Let them know it is permissible for them to fail and learn from their failures as well.
- Insist that children complete tasks. Finishing a job makes one feel good about oneself.
- The more you compliment a child, the more he/she learns to appreciate others.
- Practice and preach positive thinking and express positive thoughts to your child.
- Children become what you tell them they are!
- Create opportunities for children to help others, such as neighbors, smaller children, and grandparents.
- Belonging to clubs, groups and other organizations enhances self-esteem.
- Build confidence by believing in your child. Encourage them to accept challenges.
- A good trait to promote is patience. Growing flowers or vegetables, waiting in line patiently, and sitting quietly teaches patience.
- Correct and discipline children in private.
- Prepare children for new experiences and difficult situations. Everyone feels more confident when they know what is going to happen.
- Children with positive self-concepts work to correct problems rather than spend time worrying about them.
- Let children choose their own activities, but interfere if they are doing something immoral or dangerous.
- Ask your child's opinion. Anyone's self-esteem is enhanced by this practice.
- Making others laugh is good for one's self-concept. But teach children the difference between positive and negative humor. Humor should never hurt.
- A wink can be a secret hug.

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Some of the preceding material was taken from a workshop presented by Larry Deaton of Fort Osage, Mo., schools.

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