

Self Esteem

- Self-esteem is the collection of beliefs or feelings that we have about ourselves. How we define ourselves hugely influences our motivations, attitudes, and behaviors
- Starts very early in life: At about the age of 3 or 4 children are exploring many ideas and reaching conclusions about themselves that begin to crystallize. When a baby or toddler reaches a milestone, she experiences a sense of accomplishment that bolsters her developing self-esteem. Learning to roll over after dozens of unsuccessful attempts or finally mastering getting the spoon into her mouth every time she eats are experiences that teach a young child a "can do" attitude. The concept of success following persistence starts early.
- As a child tries, fails, tries again, fails again and again, and then finally succeeds, he/she is developing ideas about her own capabilities. At the same time, he/she is creating thoughts about herself based on his/her interactions with other people. This is why parental involvement is key to helping a child form accurate, healthy self-perceptions.
- Self-esteem can also be defined as the combination of feelings of capability with feelings of being loved.
- A child who is happy with achievements but does not feel loved may eventually experience low self-esteem.
- Likewise, a child who feels loved but is hesitant about his/her own abilities can also end up feeling poorly about herself.
- Healthy self-esteem results when the right balance is attained
- How to help promote
 - Watch what you say. Children are very sensitive to parents' words. Remember to praise your child not only for a job well done, but also for effort. But be truthful. For example, if your child doesn't make the soccer team, avoid saying something like, "Well, next time you'll work harder and make it." Instead, say something like, "Well, you didn't make the team, but I'm really proud of the effort you put into it." Reward effort and completion instead of outcome.
 - Be a positive role model. If you are excessively harsh on yourself, pessimistic, or unrealistic about your abilities and limitations, your child may eventually mirror you. Nurture your own self-esteem, and your child will have a great role model.
 - Identify and redirect your child's inaccurate beliefs. The pervasive step for parents to take is to identify kids' irrational beliefs about themselves. Whether they are about perfection, attractiveness, ability, or anything else, these inaccurate perceptions can take root and become reality to a child. For example, a child who does very well in school but struggles with math may say, "I can't do math. I'm a bad student." Not only is this a false generalization, it's also a belief that will set her up for failure. Encourage your child to see the situation in its true light. A helpful response might be: "You are a good student. You do great in school. Math is just a subject that you need to spend more time on. We'll work on it together."

- Be spontaneous and affectionate with your child. Your love will go a long way to boost your child's self-esteem. Give hugs. Say that you're proud of him/her. Leave a note in his/her lunch box that reads, "I think you're terrific!" Give praise frequently and honestly, without overdoing it. Kids can tell whether something comes from the heart.
- Give positive, accurate feedback. A comment such as, "You always work yourself up into such a frenzy!" will cause a child to start believing she has no control over her outbursts. A better statement is, "Boy, you were really mad at your brother. But I appreciate that you didn't yell at him or hit him." This acknowledges her feelings and rewards the choice she made, encouraging her to make the right choice again next time.
- Create a safe, nurturing home environment. A child who does not feel safe or is being abused in her own home will suffer immensely from low self-esteem. A child who is exposed to parents who fight and argue repeatedly may become depressed and withdrawn. Always remember to protect and respect your child.
- Help your child become involved in constructive experiences. Activities that encourage cooperation rather than competition are especially helpful in fostering self-esteem. For example, mentoring programs in which an older child helps a younger one learn to read can do wonders for both children.