

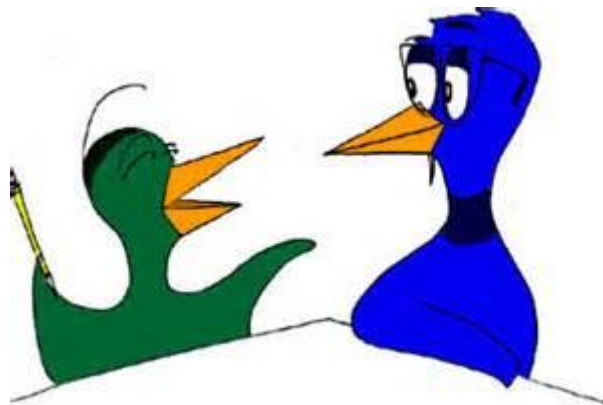
Top Tips for Developing Self-Esteem in Your Child/Young Person



A child/young person's self-esteem means how they feel about themselves. A child/young person's feelings of self-worth affect school success, how they relate to other people and creativity. Children/young people with high self esteem tend to have fewer battles with their parents. Research shows that *all* children/young people benefit when their parents take steps to help them develop positive feelings of self-worth.

1. Ensure your child/young person feels special and appreciated.

Research indicates that one of the main factors that contributes to a child/young person developing good self-esteem is the presence of at least one adult who spends one to one time, who helps the them to feel special and appreciated, and focuses on their strengths. One way for you to do this is to set aside "special times" during the week to be alone together. Try to avoid distractions such as technology. Also, during these special times, focus on things that your child/young person enjoys doing and give them the chance to pick an activity to do together.



2. Encourage the development of problem-solving and decision-making skills.

High self-esteem is associated with good problem-solving skills. For example, if your child/young person is having difficulty with a friend, you can ask them to think about a couple of ways of solving the situation. Don't worry if your child/young person can't think of solutions immediately; you can help them reflect upon possible solutions. Also, try role-playing situations with your child/young person to help demonstrate the steps involved in problem solving.

3. Encourage your child/young person to challenge negative thinking.

Children/young people who have had negative experiences in early life tend to develop negative ways of thinking. Help your child/young person to change their negative thinking by providing them with a more positive way of thinking; for example, if they don't get picked for a sport's team, they might think "they don't like me". Challenge this thinking by asking your child/young person whether there is any evidence for this, whether it is helpful to think in this way, and get them to recognise different areas of strength. By challenging negative thoughts, you are enabling your child/young person to develop more positive ways of thinking that will lead to better self-esteem.



4. Use positive language.

For example, "Try harder and put in more of an effort" may not be helpful. Many children/young people do try hard and still have difficulty. Instead say, "We have to figure out better strategies to help you learn." This approach also reinforces problem-solving skills.

5. Be an empathetic parent.

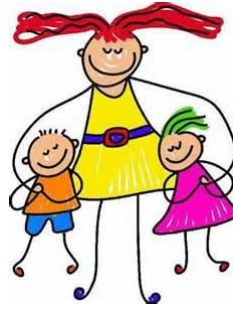
Try to see things from your child/young person's eyes. It can be helpful to consider the reason why they might be having difficulties. If your child/young person is having trouble learning a new skill, it is best to be empathetic and tell them that you know they are finding it hard; then problem solve together about possible solutions.

6. Provide choices for your child.

Allow your child/young person some flexibility and control over their routine. For example, for a younger child you could ask if they would they prefer a yoghurt or a banana for their snack. These beginning choices help to set the foundation for a feeling of control over one's life.

7. Do not compare siblings.

It is important not to compare siblings and to highlight the strengths of all members of your family.



8. Highlight your child/young person's strengths.

Help your child/young person to be more aware of their areas of strength and reinforce these if they are having difficulty in another area. For example, if your child/young person is a wonderful artist, display their artwork. Children/young people thrive on praise. But it must be specific and sincere to have a positive effect. It is not necessary to wait until they have done something exceptional to provide praise. Praising an everyday event like getting ready for school on time is enough. Praise efforts not outcomes.

9. Provide opportunities for children/young people to help.

Providing opportunities for children/young people to help is a good way of giving them a sense of achievement. Helping others boosts self-esteem and provides opportunity for praise.



10. If your child/young person has a diagnosis, help them to understand the nature of their challenges.

Many children/young people do not understand why they have difficulties which add to their distress. Having realistic information can give them a greater sense of control.

11. Show your child/young person lots of love and affection.

Parents should tell their children often that they love them, what they love about them and how lucky they are to have them. Parents should show their children that they are loved by giving lots of hugs and kisses.

