

Self-Esteem: What is it and how can you develop it in your child?

What is Self-Esteem?

Your child's self-esteem is simply how "good" she feel about herself. These feelings come from the perception that they are valued and accepted by people who are close to them.

During your child's early years, it is the adults in his or her life that have the greatest impact on self-esteem.

Children with a healthy sense of self-esteem feel that the important adults in their lives accept them, care about them, and would go out of their way to ensure that they are safe and well. They feel that those adults would be upset if anything happened to them and would miss them if they were separated. They believe they have characteristics valued by the important adults in their lives.

Children with low self-esteem, on the other hand, feel that the important adults and peers in their lives do not accept them, do not care about them very much, and would not go out of their way to ensure their safety and well-being. They believe they do not have the characteristics valued by the important adults in their community.

Families, communities, and ethnic and cultural groups vary in the criteria on which self-esteem is based. For example, some groups may emphasize physical appearance, and some may evaluate boys and girls differently. Prejudice and discrimination are also factors that may contribute to low self-esteem among children.

You can help develop your child's self-esteem.

- *Develop attachments in infancy, instill love, acceptance, and trust.

- *Assist your child in developing healthy relationships with peers. As they grow, children become increasingly sensitive to the evaluations of their peers.

- *Ensure your child that you support and accept him even if peers do not. A child may feel self-confident and accepted at home, but not around the neighborhood.

- *Respond to your child's interests and efforts with appreciation rather than praise. Support your child's interests; help them to find more information on it, provide opportunities to engage in it.

- *Involve your child in meaning activities that offer a real challenge. Young children are more likely to benefit from tasks and activities that offer a real challenge than from those that are merely frivolous or fun.

- *Treat your child respectfully. Ask their views and opinions, take their views and opinions seriously.

- *Help your child cope with defeats, rather than emphasizing constant success and triumphs.

During times of disappointment or crisis, your child's weakened self-esteem may be strengthened when you let the child know that your love and support remain unchanged.

For more information, check any of the following, detach this section, and mail it to your local Resource and Referral Office.

- More information on Self-esteem
- Child Development
- Children's Emotions
- Child Behavior
- Activities to Use with My Child
- How to Get Professional Assistance for my Child
- Other _____

The information for this publication came from ERIC document "How Can We Strengthen Children's Self-Esteem?"



The Center for Parent Involvement (FCPI) was funded by the U.S. Department of Education; Goals 2000, Educate America Act from 1994-1999. Guided by an advisory board of parents and professionals, the FCPI's goal was to tap the power of parents.

The FCPI gathered information on parent needs, coordinated the information, and created a series of resources organized by theme, including fact sheets for parents and professionals, "Beyond the Basics" resources, and resource identification lists. Many of the resources have been translated into Spanish language versions, and every effort has been made to preserve the meaning and flavor of the original English documents. This series of materials provides a wealth of current information for both parents and providers; the complete set of resources can be obtained in PDF format on the Department of Child and Family Studies Website at www.fmhi.usf.edu/cfs/dares/fcpi. The staff of the FCPI are hopeful that their work will continue to help children get ready to learn for many years to come.

The series' themes include:

- Family Empowerment
- Parent Involvement
- Parenting Support
- School Readiness
- Violence in the Lives of Children
- Transition to Kindergarten

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Parent Support Series, Beyond the Basics, : Self Esteem.

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