

20 Tips to Promote Positive Self-Esteem

Richard Lavoie

1. Value each child as an individual with unique strengths, needs, interests, and skills.
2. Focus on the child's strengths. Emphasize and celebrate his "islands of competence."
3. Reject the child's behavior, but never reject the child. Use affectionate terms and nicknames when scolding ("Your room is a mess, honey. Now turn off the TV and make your bed.").
4. Remember that sincere interest can be more effective and meaningful than praise. Demonstrate a genuine interest in her activities, hobbies, etc.
5. Establish realistic, achievable goals for your child. Anticipate success.
6. Avoid using sarcasm with kids; children with language problems often misinterpret it.
7. When discussing an issue or a problem, avoid bringing up past difficulties.
8. Never compare one child to another.
9. Help the child develop decision-making and problem-solving skills.
10. Understand that mistakes are an inevitable (and valuable) part of any learning experience. Use mistakes as an opportunity to teach and assist.
11. Divide large tasks into smaller, manageable ones. This will ensure success, mastery, and retention.
12. Maintain a file of his academic work. Use this to demonstrate his progress and development when he is feeling down.
13. Encourage him to maintain "collections" (e.g., baseball cards, stamps, rocks, etc.). This allows him to be the resident expert on a topic.
14. If she does not participate in team sports, promote individual sports (e.g., skiing, golf, swimming). This will provide opportunities for success, exercise, and peer interaction.
15. Communicate your confidence in the child and in her future.
16. Permit and encourage the child to follow the normal fads of his peer group (e.g., clothing, music). This will enhance his acceptance at school and in the community.
17. Emphasize the positive aspects of her behavior or performance, even if the task was not completely successful. Reward direction, not perfection.
18. Anticipate that the child will have plateaus, failures, backslides, setbacks, and regressions. Support and encourage him at these times. Kids need love most when they deserve it least!
19. Look for opportunities to offer him choices to allow him to practice decision-making skills.
20. Never communicate disappointment to your child. The disappointment of an adult may be too great a burden for a child to carry.

Remember:

- Your child's self-esteem will be determined by the conditional acceptance that he receives from others - and the unconditional acceptance that he receives from you. Your child's self-esteem will be determined by success and progress in four areas:
 - Social (acceptance, friendships)
 - Competence (in a skill area)
 - Physical (clothing, attractiveness)
 - Character (effort, generosity, etc.)