

## SELF ESTEEM

Children's self-esteem refers to the extent to which they expect to be valued by the adults and peers who are important to them. Feelings of self-esteem or self worth influence happiness, success at school and the way we relate to other people.

During the early years, children's self-esteem is based largely on their perception of how the significant adults in their lives judge them. Children's self-esteem is linked with their own efforts and accomplishments. Positive self-esteem results from having these efforts and achievements noticed by others.

Many children's self-esteem falls when they start school and have to cope in a strange environment with lots of other new children and new rules to learn. Self-esteem in the primary school years is about how well children manage the learning tasks of the school, how they do at sport, how they look and how they can make friends with other children.

In adolescence, self-esteem can be affected by physical and hormonal changes and most importantly by how they look or how they think they look. Belonging to a group of friends is also very important to an adolescent's self-esteem.

Promoting good self-esteem in children who have a characteristic which distinguishes them from other children (e.g. a vision impairment) is especially important. Such children can sometimes be subject to negativity, taunts and thoughtless remarks from others. Even if this is not the case, just the sense of being different can, for some children, be enough to question their own worth.

*Self esteem is feeling good about yourself, feeling that you are a worthwhile person. While we all have doubts at times, it is important for children to feel ok about themselves most of the time. Self esteem enables them to try new things without too much fear of failing, to reach out and make friends, and to manage problems they likely to meet along the way. Good self esteem builds a solid foundation for life.*

## How can I tell if a child has healthy self-esteem?

A person with low self esteem is more likely to be unhappy, have doubts about themselves, lack confidence to try new things and feel guilt and sadness.

How can I tell if a child has healthy self esteem?

### A child with healthy self esteem:

- Expects to succeed (eventually)
- Is willing to try new things
- Demonstrates respect for others and expects the same for themselves
- Is able to effectively solve problems or conflicts
- Is socially competent

## What can teachers do to help promote healthy self esteem in children?

- Show that they are valued by giving them your time.
- Point out that what they have done may not be perfect but neither is anyone else.
- Show that you appreciate their efforts and persistence and that sometimes you fail before you succeed.
- Give them responsibility appropriate to their year level so they can show that they can follow through and be relied upon.
- Remind the child of the good times and success when they experience bad times.
- Ask them for help and advice at times. Show that you do not know all the answers.
- Keep giving sincere messages that build self esteem to the child, even if they say they don't believe you. These messages matter.
- Don't solve all problems for the child. Encourage problem solving skills.
- Encourage the development of independence skills so that the child can manage many things for themselves and is not unnecessarily reliant on others in social situations.
- Encourage and support the child to develop a special talent, skill or interest (eg music, dance, clubs, sporting activity, etc).
- Assist the child to experience success, eg by showing him/her how to complete a task, or by breaking it down into smaller, more achievable steps.

Hang in there. When children are the most trying, it is usually because they are not feeling good. This is the time they need to know that you are hanging in there with them.

## What can parents do to help promote healthy self esteem in children?

For almost all parents there are times when you worry about your child's self esteem.

### Here are some things you can do to help:

- Tell your child often that you love them and let them see that you are glad they are who they are.
- Show your child that you love them by spending time with them, listening to their point of view, and being willing to help them achieve their goals eg drive them to sport and watch when they play.
- Support their school work - take an interest without taking over. Support school working bees or assist at the canteen if you can.
- Encourage friendships and make their friends welcome and get to know them.
- If they need extra help with their school work, provide this but do not make it all consuming. Try to not focus everything on what they are not good at, children need time to practice what they are good at to feel successful to focus on their strengths as well.
- Talk with the teacher. A good relationship between school and home is very important.
- Help your child to explore any hobbies that they are interested in.
- Help your child feel that they are needed in your family. Within reason for the child's age, ask and expect some help with the family chores such as feeding pets, setting the table etc (not just clean up their own mess but contribute to the family).
- Let your child assist you with something- eg teenagers may be better than you at posting something to instagram, ask them to show you how.
- When you play games with your primary school age child make sure that they have opportunities to win. If children win sometimes it is easier for them to learn to be good losers.
- Involve them in the wider family; help them to know their relatives and about your family and its history.
- Keep special mementoes of their successes and important milestones.  
**mementoe = mementoes**
- Keep little family rituals eg story at bedtime, kiss goodbye and the other ways of doing things that are special to your family.
- Celebrate achievements and successes.

## What can parents do to help promote healthy self esteem in children?

Continued...

- Don't solve all problems for your child. Help them learn problem solving skills and learn to feel that they can manage many things for themselves. Show them that you have faith in them.
- Allow them to make mistakes, let them fail and show them that you fail too.
- Talk about strengths, write them down, display them around the home.
- Keep photos of happy times and milestones around the home or make a collage of photos to keep in their bedroom.