

I ♥
ME

Building REAL Self- Esteem in Children

I ♥
ME

(www.todaysparent.com)

Most parents want to "up" their child's self-esteem. It's a common question I get from parents. "How do I make sure my child is confident enough? How can I help her believe in herself? How can she eventually bounce back from disappointment?"

Well, there are a few things that parents should know that can help support their child in developing all of the above. We know constant praise doesn't work, and in fact, may backfire. The most helpful things of all seem to be:

- 1. Stability Counts.** Providing a stable living environment wherein the child feels love and unconditional positive regard. This goes beyond the basic needs of food, shelter and clothing. It includes routine, limits, laughter, love and sense of belonging. Knowing that you and your home are a safe haven provides the foundation on which all other building blocks for self-esteem will rest. Every child in the world needs this.
- 2. Challenge.** Allow your children to be challenged. This stretches their mental muscle and lets them feel accomplished when they complete a task they had not earlier been able to master. Focus on progress, not perfection. Cheer your child on to victory. Support her in her defeat.
- 3. Listen Up.** Your child needs your undivided attention. No, not all day long. Thank goodness, because if this were the case, you'd never get anything done. Your child needs some time alone to dream, doodle and entertain herself. But, she also needs and deserves your full attention, at times. Put that iPad or phone down. Stop multi-tasking. Look into your child's eyes. LISTEN. Really listen. Reflect back to her what she is asking or saying to you. Make her feel understood and wanted.
- 4. Praise Effort, Not Outcomes.** "You worked really hard on folding those socks. Look how many you did!" "You never gave up on that math homework! Good for you!" "It's fun for me to watch you play soccer. When you got knocked down, you got right back up and kept running! Way to go!" "You studied hard for that spelling test and did your very best! Excellent effort!"

5. **Help Children Be YOU-nique.** Each and every child is magnificent. (So is every adult.) When we look for it, we can find amazing qualities in every child we meet. Help your child identify what makes her unique, what makes her stand out, what makes her special and different from anyone else in the world.

The list of things that help kids build self-esteem could go on and on. This will give you a start. Add your own ideas. Just avoid the constant, ongoing praise that kids drown out and stop believing in after a while. It backfires from its intended purpose. Focus on helping your child be strong and secure in herself. Self-esteem is an inside job! Help her make her own internal dialogue **STRONG** and **CLEAR**, so she learns to trust and rely on herself.

