

RAISE A CHILD WITH HEALTHY SELF-ESTEEM

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One of the most important things parents can do is ensure that their children develop healthy self-esteem. Children with healthy self-esteem have an easier time facing challenges and believe they are deserving of love, while those with lower self-esteem tend to be very self-critical and are less likely to face challenges because they are scared of failing.

Here are a few tips for helping your child develop good self-esteem:

Provide specific labeled praise. It's important to compliment and praise your children freely—just make sure you're being truthful.

Model healthy self-esteem. Children are always watching their parents and modeling their behavior. If you are struggling with your own self-esteem, your child will see that and likely struggle with her own self-esteem.

Make sure your child is media literate. Watch television and movies with your child and discuss what is happening on screen. This will help your child develop a critical eye that will help him decode the barrage of negative media messages.

Help your child understand that effort and completion are sometimes just as important as performance. By teaching your child this, he will understand that you value him based on who he is as a person and not how well he performs in school or on the soccer field.

Encourage risk taking. Allow your child to take a few risks and make her own decisions so that she can develop self-confidence and learn to trust herself. This may result in the occasional failure, but that's OK. Make sure you praise her bravery or creativity and model "brushing it off" for your child.

Remember that failure is a part of life. Many parents struggle to let their children fail, but failure is vital to developing healthy self-esteem. Failure teaches kids resilience—how to pick themselves up and try again.

Help children figure out what they're good at. Kids derive self-confidence from working hard to reach achievable goals and engaging in activities for which they have a natural aptitude. Help your child figure out what it is that they are particularly good at—painting, exploring nature, sports, singing, etc.—and then get them involved in these activities. This is also a great way for kids to meet other children with similar interests, and healthy friendships support healthy self-esteem.

Let your children know that your love is unconditional. Make sure your children know that you love them no matter what. Make it clear that your love for them is not contingent on good grades, athletic prowess or appearance. Show your affection verbally (I love you!) and nonverbally (a wink, a hug, setting aside time to talk without distraction) without worrying about spoiling them.

*Excerpted from internet article "Raise a Child with Healthy Self-Esteem" by Dr. Jamie Howard
<http://www.pbs.org/parents/expert-tips-advice/2015/12/raise-a-child-with-healthy-self-esteem/>*