



Strengthening Self-Esteem

Suggestions for strengthening your child's self-esteem:

- **Understand your child's learning styles.** Your child's learning style (for example, visual (by seeing), auditory (by listening to), kinesthetic (by doing), or tactile (by touching)) influences the way they perceive, conceptualize, organize, and recall information. Your child will learn better and more quickly if your teaching style matches their preferred learning style, which will also enhance their self-esteem (creating a positive cycle)
- **Understand your child's temperament.** The "fit" between your child's temperament, your parenting style, and your home environment, influences your child's self-evaluation. Understanding your child's temperament will encourage you to take on a more compassionate and supportive approach with your parenting.
- **Teach your child problem solving skills.** Avoid rushing in to solve your child's problems. Instead, engage your child in the process of thinking about two or three possible solutions, consider what solution might work best, and then attempt that solution.
- **Encourage your child to contribute.** Self-esteem is nurtured when children are asked to contribute to the well-being of others (the message is, "We need your help."). Ask your child to help with certain household responsibilities or to help out others (for example, by contributing to a toy or book drive, or giving leftovers to a person in need).
- **Treat mistakes as learning opportunities.** Children with high self-esteem view mistakes as experiences from which to learn, rather than things they cannot change. Model effective ways of coping with mistakes. Help your child handle and respond to mistakes, setbacks, and failures in healthy ways.
- **Make your child feel special.** Create special times alone with your child each day or week. Let your child know how much this special alone time means to you and why.
- **Follow your child's lead during play.** Helping your child carry out their own ideas will build greater confidence, strength, and leadership.
- **Provide your child with new and challenging activities.** If they're age appropriate, challenging and new experience will expand your child's skills and build confidence.
- **Recognize your child's progress and accomplishments.** Focus on the steps your child has taken to reach a goal (for example, "You helped put your shoes on by stepping your feet into them yourself and pulling over the velcro straps! That was a big help.").

- **Praise for the effort, not the outcome.** Focusing just on the final result makes your child feel as if they are only valued when they are successful. Focusing on the process and the effort gives your child something they can control.
- **Break down difficult tasks into manageable steps.** Some tasks can seem very overwhelming to young children. They often deal with these situations by giving up—such as by refusing to step into the shallow end of the pool or stopping halfway up the ladder to the “big slide.” When you help your child break down these challenging tasks into smaller steps, they’ll be much more likely to feel confident that they can do them (for example, getting into the swimming pool or sliding down the big slide at the park).
- **Show empathy.** When your child struggles with a challenge, empathize with them. For example, “You tried to pour your own milk, that’s great. Some of it spilled, but that happens and will get easier the more you practice.”
- **Model for self-confidence.** Your child learns a lot from watching you.
- **Model for persistence.** Even when it comes to simple, everyday things (like opening a top that is stuck), talk through your frustration and share your excitement when things work out.
- **Model confidence in new situations.** In new situations or with new people, your child will take cues from you about how to feel. Try to appear calm, confident, and happy.