

Boosting Your Child's Self-Esteem

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A child's self-esteem begins to form when he/she is an infant. The parents or caretakers lay the foundation for self-esteem by how they respond to the child. For example, when parents respond to an infant's cries with care and compassion, the infant begins to feel valued and acknowledged in a way that creates a positive sense of identity.

As the child grows and develops, the reactions of other adults and peers in his/her environment continue to influence the child's self-perception. Children with the greatest positive self-esteem believe that they are accepted and valued by the adults and peers in their environment. Once positive self-esteem is established, a child has the confidence to take the emotional risks to differentiate him/herself from peers. With a greater sense of independence, a child is able to make choices for his/her own well-being.

Following are some suggestions for developing a positive self-esteem in your child:

- Be positive—focus on your child's successes and strengths
- Praise what he/she does and not who he/she is
- Reassure your child that you accept and support him or her even when others do not
- Ask your child his/her opinions about things and listen to his/her solutions
- Help your child in understanding that he/she will have some disappointments in life. Use this time to strengthen his/her ability to cope, and to reflect on what might have gone wrong
- Keep the lines of communication open
- Help your child to establish and to work toward goals

Communicating with your child and encouraging your child to confide in you is a key element in working through potential problems. Accepting your child will boost his/her self-esteem and give your child the confidence to value himself/herself.