

Children's Self Esteem

How Parents Can Help

By: Bright Tomorrows Staff from kidshealth.org

How can a parent help to foster healthy self-esteem in a child? These tips can make a big difference:

Be careful what you say. Kids can be sensitive to parents' and others' words. Remember to praise your child not only for a job well done, but also for effort. Reward effort and completion instead of outcome.

Be a positive role model. If you're excessively harsh on yourself your kids might eventually mirror you. Nurture your own self-esteem and they'll have a great role model.

Identify and redirect inaccurate beliefs. It's important for parents to identify kids' irrational beliefs about themselves, whether they're about perfection, attractiveness, ability, or anything else.

Be spontaneous and affectionate. Your love will help boost your child's self-esteem. Give hugs and tell kids you're proud of them when you can see them putting effort toward something or trying something at which they previously failed. Put notes in your child's lunchbox with messages like "I think you're terrific!"

Give positive, accurate feedback. Positive feedback acknowledges a child's feelings, rewards the choice made, and encourages the child to make the right choice again next time.

Create a safe, loving home environment. Kids who don't feel safe or are abused at home are at greatest risk for developing poor self-esteem. A child who is exposed to parents who fight and argue repeatedly may feel they have no control over their environment and become helpless or depressed.

Help kids become involved in constructive experiences. Activities that encourage cooperation rather than competition are especially helpful in fostering self-esteem.

When promoting healthy self-esteem, it's important to not have too much or too little but "just enough." For more information about Bright Tomorrows visit www.brightcac.org.