



Kinship Link

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Building Self-Esteem in Children

Pro Kinship for Kids

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Self-esteem is liking yourself, feeling worthwhile, believing in yourself, and knowing what you do well.

Self-confidence is your belief in yourself and your abilities. Self-esteem and self-confidence overlap, but they are as you can see different. Right from birth, kids learn new skills at a dizzying rate. And along with those new abilities, they also acquire the confidence to use them. As children get older, that confidence can be as important as the skills themselves. To thrive, kids need to trust in their own capabilities while, at the same time, knowing that they can handle it if they aren't successful at something. It's by experiencing mastery and rebounding from failure that they develop healthy self-confidence and build their self-esteem, because they learn to like themselves.

Here are 12 ways you can set kids up to feel capable and get the most mileage out of their skills and talents.

1. **Model confidence yourself** - Even if you're not quite feeling it! Seeing you tackle new tasks with optimism and lots of

preparation sets a good example for kids. That doesn't mean you have to pretend to be perfect. Do acknowledge your anxiety, but don't focus on it - focus on the positive things you are doing to get ready.

2. **Don't get upset about mistakes** - Help kids see that everyone makes mistakes and the important thing is to learn from them, not dwell on them. Some people worry that praising kids too much will spoil them. Yet as a child self-esteem grows, so does her or his sense of responsibility and competence.

Confident people don't let fear of failure get in their way - not because they're sure they won't ever fail, but because they know how to take setbacks in stride.

Assigning chores and praising accomplishments makes children feel valued. Their self-confidence and independence grow, and their increasing sense of security helps them confront the many challenges that are a natural part of growing up.

3. **Encourage them to try new things** - Instead of focusing all their energy on what they already excel at, it's good for kids to diversify. Attaining new skills makes kids feel capable and confident that they can tackle whatever comes their way.
4. **Allow kids to fail** - It's natural to want to protect your child from failure, but trial and error is how kids learn, and falling short on a goal helps kids find out that it's not fatal. It can also spur kids to greater effort, which will serve them well as adults.
5. **Praise perseverance** - Learning not to give up at the first frustration or bail after one setback is an important life skill. Confidence and self-esteem are not about succeeding at everything all the time, they're about being resilient enough to keep trying, and not being distressed if you're not the best.
6. **Help kids find their passion** - Exploring their own interests can help kids develop a sense of identity, which is essential to building confidence.

Building Self-Esteem in Children continued

- Of course, seeing their talents grow will also give a huge boost to their self-esteem.
7. **Set goals** - Articulating goals, large or small, and achieving them makes kids feel strong. Help your child turn desires and dreams into actionable goals by encouraging them to make a list of things they'd like to accomplish. Then, practice breaking down longer-term goals into realistic benchmarks. You'll be validating their interests and helping them learn the skills they'll need to attain their goals throughout life.
 8. **Celebrate effort** - Praising kids for their accomplishments is great, but it's also important to let them know you're proud of their efforts regardless of the outcome. It takes hard work to develop new skills, and results aren't always immediate. Let kids know you value the work they're doing, whether they're toddlers building with blocks, or teenagers teaching themselves to play the guitar.
 9. **Expect them to pitch in** - They might complain, but kids feel more connected and valued when they're counted on to do age-appropriate jobs, from picking up toys to doing dishes, to picking up younger siblings from a play time. Homework and after-school activities are great, but being needed by your family is invaluable.
 10. **Embrace imperfection** - As grown-ups we know perfection is unrealistic, and it's important for kids to get that message as early as possible. Help kids see that whether it's on TV, in a magazine, or on a friend's social media feed, the idea that others are always happy, successful, and perfectly dressed is a fantasy, and a destructive one. Instead, remind them that being less than perfect is human and totally okay.
 11. **Set them up for success** - Challenges are good for kids, but they should also have opportunities where they can be sure to find success. Help your child get involved with activities that make him or her feel comfortable and confident enough to tackle a bigger challenge.
 12. **Show your love** - Let your child know you love him or her no matter what. Win or lose the big games, good grades or bad. Even when you're mad at them. Making sure your child knows that you think they're great - and not just when they do great things - will bolster their self-worth even when they're not feeling good about themselves.
- Studies show that children who feel confident are better able to stand up to bullies. Parents should give kids the tools they need to stand up for themselves and help them learn to solve problems. As they get older, they will be able to handle difficult situations on their own this way. The way parents interact with their children influences the type of people they become. Nurturing parents who share their love help increase their children's sense of self-worth. Kids learn to feel good about themselves and to care about others. When parents build their children's self-esteem, a foundation for a strong, loving relationship is laid.

Eat Right with MyPlate

Find your healthy eating routine using these recommendations:

Make half your plate fruits and vegetables:

Focus on whole fruits.

- Choose whole, cut, or pureed fruits - fresh, frozen, dried, or canned in 100% juice.
- Enjoy fruit with meals, as snacks, or as a dessert.

Vary your veggies.

- Try adding fresh, frozen, or canned vegetables to salads, sides, and main dishes.
- Choose a variety of colorful veggies prepared in healthful ways: steamed, sauteed, roasted, or raw.

Make half your grains whole grains.

- Look for whole grains listed first on the ingredients list - try oatmeal, popcorn, teff, quinoa, millet, bulgur, brown rice, or breads, crackers, and noodles made with whole-grain flours.
- Limit grain desserts and snacks such as cakes, cookies, and pastries.

Vary your protein routine.

- Mix up your protein foods to include seafood, beans, peas and lentils, unsalted nuts and seeds, soy products, eggs, and lean meats and poultry.
- Try meatless meals made with beans and have fish or seafood twice a week.

Move to low-fat or fat-free dairy

milk or yogurt.

- Choose fat-free milk, yogurt, and calcium-fortified soymilk to cut back on saturated fat.
- Replace sour cream, cream and regular cheese with low-fat or fat-free yogurt, milk, and cheese.

Choose foods and beverages with less added sugars, saturated fat, and sodium.

- Use the nutrition facts label and ingredients list to limit items high in saturated fat, sodium, and added sugars.
- Choose vegetable oils instead of butter and oil-based sauces and dips instead of ones with butter, cream, or cheese.
- Drink water instead of sugary drinks.