



REPORT TO PARENTS

RP 24:7

Children's Self-esteem

Of course, you want your children to feel good about themselves! But if you're confused about how to help them accomplish this, it's no wonder. There are a lot of misconceptions about self-esteem, so don't be misled.

The most important thing to remember is that your children will feel good about themselves if you show that you love, value, and respect them. Praise can certainly help, but children need more than praise and being told they are good to develop the robust confidence that is characteristic of genuine and enduring self-esteem. They build this confidence by hard work and persistence in overcoming obstacles and striving to meet high but realistic standards.

What you want to avoid is creating a fragile self-esteem in your children that will collapse when they are faced with challenges. Here are some ways to make sure that their self-esteem is real and lasting.

- **Be sensible with praise.** Don't praise everything your children say or do just to make them feel good. Make your applause meaningful by praising only accomplishments that require real effort.

- **Use positive feedback.** Telling children the importance of what they have accomplished ("You really know how to write a paragraph.") will nourish their feelings of competence and give them confidence to keep on learning. The more specific your feedback, the better.

- **Be honest.** Don't ignore your children's mistakes. While you shouldn't discourage them by pointing out every mistake they make, helping them to correct some mistakes won't damage their egos. On the contrary, it signals that you are confident that they can learn by correcting their errors. But make sure you balance your constructive criticism with a compliment or two.



- **Go easy with gifts.** Too often, parents succumb to the lure of flashy television advertisements or peer pressure ("Half of the kids in my class have scooters!") to lavish "hot" toys and clothes on their children. But while this may make parents feel good about themselves, it doesn't work for children if they're used to having all their desires met. Save the gift-giving for birthdays and special occasions.

- **Grades are important, but...** It's fine to let your children know that their grades are important, but not if you base your love or approval on their school performance. If your children are having difficulty in school, don't be angry or punitive. Show them that you want to help, not judge. Talk to their teachers about ways that you can help them improve. A relaxed and supportive atmosphere at home will go a long way toward giving your children a solid sense of self-esteem.

- **Encourage challenges.** Children gain academic self-esteem by taking on work that pushes them to the limits of their skill levels. When they make mistakes, encourage them to persist. Success will boost their self-esteem and spur them to accept new challenges.

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