

10 STEPS TO confident kids

THERE ARE MANY WAYS IN WHICH PARENTS CAN ENCOURAGE THEIR CHILD'S SELF-CONFIDENCE TO FLOURISH – HERE ARE A FEW IDEAS...

GIVE THEM SOME RESPONSIBILITY

To develop self-esteem children need the opportunity to develop, practise and showcase their new skills and competencies – ask them to help out around the house, giving them different areas of responsibility.

Don't swoop in too quickly to sweep up a mess or make things better – be present and available, but let them try to figure out solutions by themselves. Let them practise making decisions to experience the outcome – if they are refusing to put on their jumpers, then let them go outside and feel that it's cold. They need to feel as if they have some sense of control over their lives and that you trust them to make decisions about their own welfare. Chances are they'll put the jumper on pretty rapidly next time.

LEARN THE LANGUAGE

Often the language we use needs a little tweak as it can sound more critical than we mean it to. Experts also suggest being specific in your praise – don't just say, 'well done,' say, 'the way you passed the ball to Oliver was really terrific.' Make these phrases part of your everyday vocabulary – 'tell me more,' 'how about a hug?,' 'How can I help?,' 'Please/ thank you,' 'I love you.' Talk positively about your child in front of them to other people, as hearing you praise them will do wonders for their self-esteem.

PUT THE PHONE DOWN

Children need to know that what they are saying matters to you, and that means giving them your full attention and, most importantly, eye contact. If children learn when they're young that their parents listen and understand what they're saying, it creates a much healthier relationship when they get older and their issues become more serious.

ALL ABOUT ME

Get them to write their names in the middle of a blank sheet of paper, then give them a pile of magazines to go through and find pictures that represent them – it could be photos of their favourite foods, sports, etc – to cut out and stick on it. They can also draw pictures or write down key words



PHOTOS BY GETTY/SHUTTERSTOCK

about their personality. The paper should be completely filled up with images and words they feel a connection with. When they're finished go through it together asking why they've chosen what they have and be interested in their replies. Stick it up in their bedroom on their wardrobe door or anywhere they'll see it each day to remind them of what makes them unique.

GIVE YOURSELF A BREAK

It's no exaggeration to say that we're the mirrors for our children. If we're grimacing at our reflections or verbalising our fear at trying something new, or getting frustrated when things just aren't going our way, then chances are little ears will prick up and absorb every word. Every

mother feels occasionally self-critical or inadequate and we all have days where nothing we're doing is right, but it's important that we don't project this on to our children. When you make mistakes yourself, admit them. Children need to know that the process of learning from our mistakes is one that continues throughout our lives, which also makes it easier for a child to accept his own shortcomings.

MAKE YOUR FEEDBACK CONSTRUCTIVE

If you know that they have tried their best then make sure that you recognise the effort they've put in, regardless of the outcome. The aim is to make their pride at trying hard override any feelings of disappointment or shame they have at not succeeding. It's also important that they feel compelled to persevere and not give up, which they'll learn through your encouragement.



GET CREATIVE

Write the start of a sentence on a page and get them to finish it – things like 'I am special because...'; 'If I was a superhero what would my powers be and what would I do?'; 'If you could change the world what would you do?'; 'Write about a time you made

a big mistake, and fixed it'; and 'What is the bravest thing you have ever done?'

Getting children to answer questions about themselves gives them the chance to analyse their personality and make sense of their thoughts. If your little one is more artistically inclined then try making self-esteem trees or

CELEBRATE INDIVIDUALISM

It's completely natural to compare younger siblings to their older ones, after all, it's usually the only reference point we have – phrases like 'Josh is a much better sleeper than Andrew was at this age,' slip out of parents' mouths without thinking, but it can be detrimental to a child's self-esteem to always hear themselves pitched against

their sibling. Every child is different and expecting them all to be identically good academically or at sports or music, or simply in their behaviour, is both unrealistic and damaging.

They will each have their own strengths and weaknesses and the important thing is to highlight their individuality and concentrate on what makes them special, not making them feel bad that they don't measure up to their sister or brother.

ATTITUDE OF GRATITUDE

Madeeha Afridi says that nurturing the habit of being grateful can cultivate self-confidence and self-esteem in a child. This happens when parents make a conscious decision to focus on and point out the positives in their environment and in life's events. Parents can do this by having a 'gratitude jar' at home and every family member writes one thing a day on what they're grateful for to add into the jar.



“Make sure the child's goals are realistic, if they are not, they'll never have a chance of reaching them, which is when self-esteem can plummet”

FEEL-GOOD NOTES

Buy your child a diary or a plain notebook that they can then decorate themselves however they like. At the end of every day encourage them to write down five good things that happened to them that day, it could be anything from scoring a winning goal to

making somebody laugh. If your child is too young to write the notes themselves, they could draw pictures, or even dictate to you the words they want you to write down for them. Having all the good things that have happened to them stored in one place serves as a great pick-me-up whenever they have a bad day, or are feeling a bit down.

3 confidence-boosting classes

HAYLEY'S COMET

Run by professional actor and dancer Hayley Doyle, this kids' theatre company encourages children and teenagers to use their creative force in drama, dance and singing to become stage starlets. Fun and collaborative weekly after-school classes in musical theatre all lead up to an end-of-term showcase. Email info@hayleyscomet.com or call 055 104 0538 for details.

SELF-ESTEEM FOR TEENAGERS WORKSHOPS

Held at LifeWorks Dubai, this course helps teens develop the seven key elements that form the foundation for social and emotional well-being and to enable healthy self-esteem, using strategies of creative thinking and image-work. See www.counsellingdubai.com or call 04 394 2464.

KIDZ ART

A programme offering workshops and classes to help children become creative thinkers and problem solvers. Designed to reach every child, regardless of artistic ability, the idea is to provide a space in which children's creativity can flourish and they can find their own individual style, without judgement, in a nurturing environment. See www.kidzart.ae.