

How can I help my young child to be more confident?

OTHER TITLES

Create It

Teaching your children to talk about their feelings

How can I help my young child learn to get along with others?

If you're a parent, you're a role model: How to teach your children by example

Nurture It

How can I teach my young child to deal with peer pressure?

Teaching your children the truth about drugs and gambling

How can I help my young child to be more confident?

How to listen actively to your children

Choose It

How can I help my child if my partner is addicted?

Helping your teen work through anger

The truth about popular drugs

How do I know if my teen is using drugs?

How do I talk to my teenager about drugs?

Raves and club drugs: How do I protect my kids?

Get It Back

Helping teens evaluate their drug use

How bad is my teen's drinking or drug use?

Does your teen's drug use leave you feeling like you're losing your sanity?

How to get through to your teen

Intervening when your teen is using drugs

Getting help for your son or daughter who is drinking, using other drugs or gambling

Supporting your son or daughter in recovery

ADULTS OFTEN LIKE TO LOOK BACK on childhood as a simpler and happier time of life, when the biggest problem was something like a rainy day on a holiday. In reality, children's lives can be pretty complicated—and their problems are not always simple ones.

As a parent or caregiver, you play the greatest role in nurturing your child's self-image. But many other influences also affect how children feel about themselves: the child's own physical growth, academic ability, athletic ability, teachers, interests and hobbies outside school, the other kids in the grade, the kids in the neighbourhood. With each passing year, you may feel that the world outside the family is making a bigger impact.

You can't always protect your child from hurtful experiences. But you can help your child feel more confident by doing and saying things that will strengthen their own feelings of self-worth.

Self-esteem

Kids of all ages need a solid sense of their own value. They need to know that there is nobody else like them in the entire world—that they have certain abilities and talents—that their thoughts and actions do make a difference—and that the way they treat themselves and others is important.

Everyone encounters major setbacks and disappointments in life. Not being picked for a sports team, or for a role in the school play, can seem like a real blow for a child. But children also have more serious issues to cope with. Good friends sometimes move far away. Families may be separated by divorce. Someone a child loves may become ill, and die. Some children have very grown-up problems to deal with. Children who have a healthy sense of self-worth are more likely to remain positive and make good choices,

even when life doesn't turn out the way it was supposed to.

How do you build a child's self-esteem?

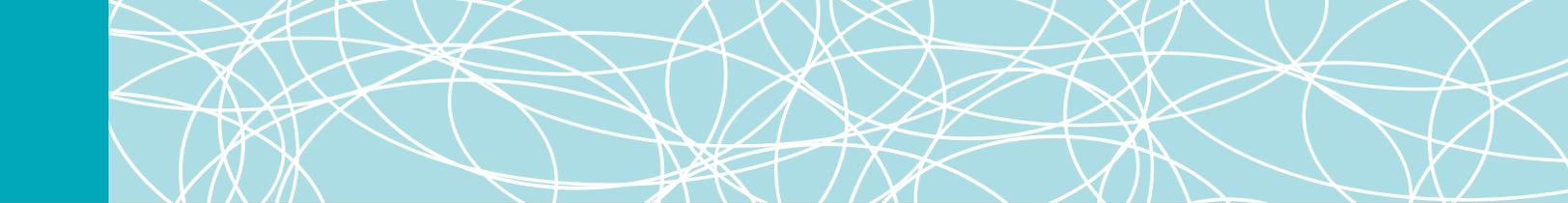
Providing encouragement and support helps to strengthen your child's confidence. This is something almost all parents do instinctively at the beginning. You praise a baby when they take their first step. You persuade them to let you push them on a swing. You applaud those first words and encourage them to keep talking.

As your child grows older, you need to set boundaries for them, and you may sometimes find more to criticize than to praise. It's easy to forget that children need praise and encouragement at every stage—when they are babies, toddlers, children, preteens and teenagers.

Talk to your child

Children need to know that they are loved and appreciated, no matter what may happen in the world around them. If there are troubles in the family, children often think that they have somehow caused the problems. You can help your child build a stronger sense of self-worth by assuring them that adult problems are not their fault, and by telling them often that you love them.

All parents and caregivers make mistakes now and then. You may sometimes allow your worries to affect the way you treat your child. When this happens, it helps if you can apologize and explain to the child



that your anger or impatience was wrong. Tell them that other problems made you lose your temper, but that they are not responsible for adult problems.

Understand your child

Children need to feel secure and cared for. They need rules and routines, and consistent love from you. Don't be afraid to say ppno to your child. Children need to know that there are limits on what they are allowed to do.

You can help your child gain a sense of responsibility and belonging by including them in some family discussions. Ask for their opinion when you make decisions about family outings or the assignment of small household tasks. When you encourage them to participate, and respect their opinion, you help your child to feel valued.

Say “I love you”

Remember to praise your child when they do something well, to thank them for helping you out, and don't forget to tell your child that you love them—just the way they are. You know how much you love your child, and assume that they know it. But if you don't show your love and say that you love them, they might not feel loved.

Self-esteem and life's choices

Children who feel neglected or unloved know that something big is missing from their lives. As they grow older, they may try to fill that emptiness by turning to alcohol, other drugs or gambling. Children who know that they are loved and who have a strong sense of their own value as individuals have a better chance of leading happy and fulfilling lives.

You are the biggest influence in your child's life, and your love and support make all the difference. When you show your love every day in little ways, you're building your child's sense of identity and self-worth. You're helping your child to become stronger and more confident. Your child will be better equipped to cope with the problems in their world, and more likely to make healthy choices in the future.

For more information

We understand that everyone's needs are different. Whether you want to prevent your child from using alcohol, tobacco or other drugs, or you want to help your child deal with a drug problem, we can help. Information and prevention programs, group and family counselling, outpatient and residential treatment, and the Protection of Children Abusing Drugs program are offered by Alberta Health Services and its funded services to help your child and your family.

For more information and to find an addiction services office near you, please call the 24-hour Helpline at 1-866-332-2322.

Activity Page

BUILDING CONFIDENCE

1. Think of the qualities that make your child unique. Write a list of those qualities and show them to your child. Find sincere and meaningful ways to compliment your child every day.
2. Here are some suggestions of things you can do to help strengthen your growing child's feelings of self-worth:
 - Spend time together.
 - Play together.
 - Talk about things together.
 - Hug each other.
 - Laugh together.
 - Tell your child often that you love them.
 - Share common interests.
 - Focus on the positive.
 - Do something together that will create a lasting memory.
 - Tell your child that they're special and that there is no one else like them in the world.
3. Read books together. Reading books with your child is a great way to connect and to open the lines of communication.
4. Look after your own needs too, and take care of yourself. When parents or caregivers feel good about themselves, they are able to give more to their children.





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