

BUILDING SELF-ESTEEM



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OVERVIEW

- DEFINE
- WHY SELF-ESTEEM IS IMPORTANT
- HOW SELF-ESTEEM IS DEVELOPED
- HEALTHY VERSUS UNHEALTHY SELF-ESTEEM
- TIPS FOR PARENTS
- RESOURCES

THINGS TO CONSIDER

- How do you feel about your self-esteem?
- How was your self-esteem nurtured?
- How was your self-esteem hurt?

DEFINITIONS

- Self-concept: Our picture or perception of ourselves
- Self-esteem: Feelings we have about ourselves
- Self-ideal: The way we would like to be

Why is self-esteem important?

- Self-esteem is important for healthy development, independence, resilience, overcoming setbacks, creativity, confidence to try new things and school success
- Affects all relationships that we have and all that we do
- A basic level of self-esteem is needed in every culture
- Helps children to feel like they can develop their own skills and contribute to the larger community

Why is self-esteem important (cont)

- Negative self-esteem can lead to:
 - Lack of confidence, less likely to try new things, may not take advantage of talents and abilities the best way they can
 - May also be linked to health outcomes such as stress, heart disease, and anti-social behaviors
 - Distorted view of themselves
 - Lack of confidence in doing things independently, they can become over-reliant on authority figures
 - Less friendships

Development of Self-Esteem

- Children are not born with self-esteem, it is learned through how parents and others feel about them and treat them
- Made up of all the experiences and interpersonal relationships they have throughout life
- Self-esteem fluctuates as kids grow and is affected by experiences, relationships, and new perceptions

Development of Self-Esteem (cont)

- Infants: Learn that they are loved and loveable through others caring for them and meeting their basic needs. The message that is sent is that they matter in the world.
- Toddlers: Learn about themselves by what they look like, what they can do, and where they belong. They need to try things for themselves, and with each new skill they learn, they develop more confidence. They see themselves through their parents eyes; if their parents show and tell them they are special and loveable, they will develop self-esteem.

Development of Self-Esteem (cont)

- Preschoolers: Learn that their minds and bodies are their own. Self-esteem develops in physical ways, such as who is the tallest, fastest, ect..
- School-age: Learn how to manage the tasks of school, sports, and activities, and how well they make friends. School, home, or social stressors can negatively impact self-esteem.
- Adolescence: Affected by physical and hormonal changes and by how they look and THINK they look. Friendships are very important because it gives them a sense of belonging.

What Influences Self-Esteem?

- Relationships and interactions with others
- Perception of how others see them
- Experiences with success and failure
- Environments (school, home, church, sports, extracurricular activities, neighborhood)
- Media (unrealistic and unattainable images)

Healthy vs. Unhealthy Self-Esteem

Healthy

- Positive Statements about themselves and others
- Accept Compliments
- Look People in the eye
- Willing to take chances
- Enjoy the success of others
- Don't worry about how others will judge them
- Has an "I think I can" attitude
- Confidence

Healthy vs. Unhealthy Self-Esteem (cont)

Unhealthy

- Put down self & others
- Reject Compliments
- See themselves failing before they begin and are often afraid to show creativity for fear of being ridiculed
- Wish they were someone else
- Hard time forgiving themselves for mistakes
- They believe they can never be as good as they should be or as good as others
- Rarely volunteer, panic when faced with new tasks
- Has an “I can’t do it “ attitude

Tips for Parents

- Praise them, be specific and sincere and focus on the positive
- Show them lots of love and affection with words and physical actions
- Treat them with respect, give them the same amount of respect you would give a friend. Watch what you say and how you say it.
- Be consistent and predictable, children need to know what to expect from their parents and what is expected from them
- Don't demand perfection, accept them for who they are, flaws and all.
- Keep your promises

Tips for Parents (cont)

- Listen and respond to your children with complete attention
- Don't allow them to criticize themselves, don't ignore it because could validate their negative feelings. Identify and redirect inaccurate beliefs
- Teach them to use positive self-talk
- Encourage decision making, giving them responsibilities helps them to feel competent and trusted
- Give them the freedom to take risks and try new things/let them fail
- Encourage friendships and welcome their friends
- Encourage interests and abilities

Tips for parents (cont)

- Display their work
- Encourage additional sources of support (teachers, coaches)
- Show appreciation for contributions at home
- Ask teens for their opinions or suggestions and encourage participation in decision making
- Discipline properly
- Emphasize the process or task
- Show confidence in their judgment
- Have positive and realistic expectations
- Give opportunities for them to win and lose

Tips for Parents (cont)

- Keep mementos of milestones and special successes
- Display and keep photos, this gives them a sense of being loved
- Help them learn problem solving skills, don't solve all their problems
- Teach personal safety, they need to learn how to say no to protect themselves
- Teach them to trust their feelings and let them know they don't need to keep secrets
- Take care of yourself, let them see that you feel good about yourself

Messages That Hurt Self-Esteem

- Ignoring and not taking an interest in them
- Constantly nagging
- Messages that say “you don’t like them” (I love you but I don’t like you) you are lazy, etc.. makes them feel as though you are saying something bad about them and not their actions
- Comparing them with others
- Messages that life would be better or easier without them
- Threatening to leave or give them away if they don’t do as you wish
- Frowning or sighing when they want to talk or ask you for something, this suggests that it is too much effort to give them your time

Building Confidence in Boys

- Be specific with your compliments, say more than “you’re great”.
- Doing trumps telling – lead by example
- Allow them to take risks
- Try not to over-protect, failure is a very important part of learning

Building Confidence in Boys (cont)

- Reward Effort vs. Achievement
- Trust them
- Model your own confidence
- Share stories of your own failures

What To Do If You Are Concerned About Your Child

- At one time or another, kids may show symptoms of low self-esteem. Watch for patterns that don't disappear. If efforts to increase self-esteem don't have an impact consult your pediatrician or counselor.
- If you suspect low self-esteem a professional can help to uncover underlying issues that prevent a child from feeling good about themselves. Therapy can help them learn to view themselves and the world positively.

Reminders

- Self-esteem is very important for everyone
- Children are not born with self-esteem
- Young children learn self-esteem through what they can do and what their parents think of them
- “Put down” messages really damage self-esteem
- “Doing” messages (hugs, smiles) are very important
- Laugh with your children, not at them
- Keep your compliments and messages sincere and detailed
- Self-esteem is learned and it can be changed
- Take care of yourself and your own self-esteem

Resources

- The Minds Of Boys: Saving Our Sons From Falling Behind in School and Life, by Michael Gurian and Kathy Stevens
- The Way of Boys: Raising Healthy Boys in a Challenging and Complex World, by Anthony Rao
- Odd Girl Out, by Rachel Simmons
- Real Girl, Real World: A Guide to Finding Your True Self, by Heather M. Gray and Samantha Phillips

Resources (cont)

- Bodypride: An Action Plan for Teens Seeking Self-Esteem and Building Better Bodies, by Cynthia Stamper Graff, Janet Eastman, and Mark C. Smith
- Stick Up for Yourself: Every Kid's Guide to Personal Power and Positive Self-Esteem, by Gershen Kaufman, Lev Raphael, and Pamela Espeland
- Be True To Yourself: A Daily Guide for Teenage Girls, by Amanda Ford

References

- The Way of Boys, Anthony Rao, Ph.D
- Women's and Children's Health Network, <http://www.cyh.com/Default.aspx?p=1>
- Center for Effective Parenting www.parenting-ed.org/
- About.com Tweens www.about.com
- KidsHealth, www.kidshealth.org
- TeensHealth, www.teenshealth.org

Questions & Answers

- Thank you for attending the Parent Café today. If you have any questions or would like to speak with us privately you can contact us at:
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