Developing Self-Esteem In Young Children

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What Is Self-Esteem?
Self-esteem is a collection of feelings and beliefs we have about ourselves. It can also be known as our "self-perceptions". Self-esteem can have an important influence on our attitudes, motivations, and behaviors.

The patterns of self-esteem begin early in life. Persistence can lead a child to important developmental milestones, which may then lead to a sense of accomplishment (for example: a child rolling over for the first time, learning to use a spoon, progressing to walking, talking, and making friends). This sense of accomplishment can bolster a child's self-esteem, helping him or her to develop ideas about their capabilities and healthy self-perceptions.

Possible signs of healthy self-esteem

- Act independently
- Assume responsibility
- Take pride in their accomplishments
- Tolerate frustration
- Handle peer pressure appropriately
- Attempt new tasks and challenges
- Handle both positive and negative emotions appropriately
- Offer assistance to others

Possible signs of poor self-esteem

- Avoiding trying new things
- Negative self-talk
- Limited interaction with other children

Give them a lot of praise
As a parent, you can help your child develop talents, skills and self-esteem by giving your child a lot of praise. Develop your skills to be able to identify possible situations for praise.

Identify with the positive
Teach your child to identify with positive self-statements. By identifying inaccurate or negative beliefs you can teach them how to think in positive ways.

Don't use shame or ridicule
Using shame or ridicule reinforces the negative aspects for your children. You can use
experiences as a positive learning lesson. Instead of shaming your child, point out how the child could reassess the situation for positive results.

**Make them the decision maker**
Teach your children to become decision makers. You can help them identify when they have made a good decision and to help children think of alternative options if they have made a poor choice. This will help your children "own" their decisions and gain confidence in their own abilities.

**Asking Questions**
Emphasize the need to ask questions when they are in doubt. No question should be considered too "small" or "out of bounds" for a child to ask. You can guide your child through simple assessment questions. You can use these questions as a template for learning to understand their development.

**Don't take it so seriously**
Incorporate a sense of humor. We can take ourselves too seriously at times. Encourage children to see the humorous side of events, but be careful not to appear to be laughing at them.

Learning how we fit in can be a lifelong quest. Those of us with children have an additional duty raising our children, the duty to help them form their identities. Children with a healthy and positive sense of themselves have a better ability to deal with life's challenges. Your children won't develop their self-esteem overnight. Building positive self-esteem is a slow process that begins with small steps. Your children will slowly test the water. It is all right to let them make mistakes during this process. Learning self-esteem and developing confidence will have its ups and downs. The strongest tools you can use in this development are patience and positive empathy. These tools will help you to show the appropriate attention throughout your children's development of their self-image.