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THE JOY OF MODERN PARENTING

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Building Your Child's Self Esteem

It has often been said that children learn what they live. So if you're looking for a place to start helping your child build positive self esteem and self value, then you should show them your positive sense of self and strong self esteem. Be positive when you speak about yourself and highlight your strengths. This will teach your child that it's okay to be proud of their talents, skills and abilities.

Your child also benefits greatly from honest and positive praise. Find something about them to praise each day. You could even give your child a task you know they can complete and then praise them for a job well done after they're finished. Show your child that positive acts merit positive praise.

When your child is feeling sad, angry or depressed, communicate openly, honestly and patiently with them. Listen to them without judging or criticizing. They may not fully understand why they feel the way they do, so the opportunity to communicate with you about it may be what is needed to help them sort through a difficult situation. Suggest positive behaviors and options as solutions, and make sure to leave that door of communication open so they know the next time they feel bad, they can come to you for help and know that you won't judge or punish them for how they're feeling.

Teach your child the importance of setting goals and developing a plan to meet that goal and complete that task. Small projects are the best to start off with in the beginning. Ensure that it's an appropriate task for your child, and not too complex. Don't only give praise at the end of the project, but praise their accomplishments during the project as well.

Most importantly, tell your child "I love you" each and every day - many times throughout the day, in fact. When they've behaved badly, remind yourself that it's not them you don't like, only their behavior. Tuck short, sweet notes in their lunchboxes or coat pockets, or even send them a card in the mail. Soon, they'll learn to say "I love you" just as easily and honestly in return.

Constructing Your Child's Healthy Sense of Self Esteem

Your child's self esteem is their mental foundation. A self-assured child is confident, secure, happy, well-adjusted and successful. They can solve problems that come their way, and thrive under a loving parent's nurturing care.

What are some good ways to built self esteem in your child?

Most importantly, accept your child for who they are, and help them to do the same. Teach your child that nobody is perfect, and that everyone makes mistakes. Show them how to learn and grow from their mistakes, and let them know that you also make mistakes. Children with high self esteem are able to take lessons from mistakes and apply them down the road. A child with low self esteem becomes frustrated and resorts to self-deprecating behavior, such as calling themselves 'stupid' and vowing to 'never try that again.'

Help your child discover their abilities and talents, and encourage outlets for them to build on and improve them. Praise a child not only for improvements in abilities and skills, but also for the traits they naturally possess.

Encourage your child to make positive choices. Open an honest dialog with your child and discuss the possibilities with them. Children who learn skills for making positive choices when they are younger are well-prepared for the tougher choices they have to make when they are older.

Ensure that you spend lots of quality time with your child, at least once a week. Whether you are shooting baskets or going out to grab a hamburger, take time to talk and keep in touch. If you find it difficult to squeeze in quality time during a hectic week, take the time to talk about things during the drive to school or while they are helping you put the groceries away.

Encourage Your Child to Feel Important

It's imperative for a child's healthy development to feel important and worthy. Healthy self-esteem is a child's armor against the challenges of the world. Kids who feel good about themselves seem to have an easier time handling conflicts and resisting negative pressures. They tend to smile more readily and enjoy life. These kids are realistic and generally optimistic. It has also been shown that children who feel important are well-rounded, respectful, and excel in academics, extracurricular activities and hobbies, and develop healthy relationships with their peers.

In contrast, children who do not feel important or cherished have low self-esteem, and challenges can become sources of major anxiety and frustration. Children who think poorly of themselves have a hard time solving problems, and may become passive, withdrawn, or depressed.

You are the biggest influence on your child feeling important, valued and worthy. Remember to praise your child for a job well done, and also for putting in a valiant effort. Praise the good traits they naturally possess, and help them find ways to learn from their mistakes and failures. Be honest and sincere in your praise. Help them realize that you also suffer from self doubt and can make mistakes from time to time, but that you know that you are important, valued and loved. When you nurture your own self-esteem and importance, your child will learn to do the same, so be sure to lead by example and steer clear of self-depreciating yourself or engaging in activities that lower your self-worth or importance.

Your child may have inaccurate or irrational beliefs about themselves, their abilities or their traits. Accentuate the positive about your child, and encourage your child to set realistic expectations and standards for themselves. Help them identify traits or skills they would like to improve and help them come up with a game plan for accomplishing that goal. Encourage your child to become involved in cooperative activities that foster a sense of teamwork and accomplishment.

Through these and other positive, affirming activities, your child is sure to develop a strong sense of self importance, value and worth which will carry into their adult years.

Positive Praise for Your Child's Pride

Praising a child correctly is important to the development of positive behaviors. It's a great way to encourage constructive future behavior. When you give praise, you are giving your child a feeling of positive feedback, which increases their sense of confidence, self esteem and abilities. When you praise your child, you are pointing out the way they've acted, an action they've taken, or simply who they are. When your child looks good, tell them so. When your child does anything that pleases you, let them know. You should also praise a child's effort to do well, even if it doesn't come out so good in the end. You should find something each day about your child to praise.

Be on the lookout constantly for behaviors or actions deserving of praise, but don't be over the top about it. Be sincere and honest in your praise. Wait for unexpected or previously unnoticed good behavior and praise your child for them. And when you see such actions or behaviors, praise immediately, so the child will know exactly what behavior or action was deemed praiseworthy. It's also very important to look your child square in the eye when you praise him, and reinforce the positive behavior, action or trait being praised with a gesture such as a warm smile, a hug, scruff of the hair, or caress their face while you tell them.

Be exact, and state precisely what action, behavior or trait you find praiseworthy. And most importantly, never directly follow praise with criticism or negative comments. Let your child know what they did right and reward them for it before you let them know what they did wrong and punish for misbehaving or a misdeed.

So be sure to admire and congratulate your child, and celebrate the good person they are growing into by praising their positive actions, behaviors and traits daily. You'll be building a strong sense of self in your child and you'll grow closer as a result.

Protect Your Child's Emotional Well-Being

In our effort to balance very full and hectic lives with our families and our jobs, we may have been neglecting an all-important facet of our child's life: their emotional well-being. The first three years of a child's life is a critical time for a child, and the trauma of changing childcare providers or having a 'part-time' parent float in and out of their life can be very traumatic and destabilizing for them. It's imperative that parents, educators, involved adults and care providers make a concerted, joint effort to ensure that a child's emotional needs are met on a daily basis, just as their physical needs are. The effects of not meeting a child's emotional needs, especially during the first three years of life, can have devastating consequences. Violent, disruptive or defiant behaviors can result.

The first three years of life are critical in a number of ways. This is when bonding and emotional separation takes place. If there are interruptions in either of these processes, misbehaviors from the child can result. This can later have an effect on their relationships later in life and hinder them in developing their own healthy relationships as adolescents or adults.

During the first three years of life, the brain goes through its most rapid development ever, the likes of which will never be experienced again. By the time they are three years old, a child's brain is already 'hardwired' from the experiences they've had to that point. It's imperative that these be loving, supportive, safe, positive experiences, so the brain will be conditioned to expect positive things. If the experiences have been frightening, hurtful, abusive, or dangerous, then the brain is conditioned to expect negative occurrences.

Therefore, it's critical that parents, caregivers and other involved adults make a concerted effort to make sure the child's emotional needs are met in a positive, constructive and healthy manner. Parents should ensure that the child's care providers are stable and consistent, and shouldn't move them around to different childcare providers during this important phase. Ensure a child feels safe and secure with structured and consistent schedules and routines. Be sure to spend as much quality time with your child at this time as possible, regardless of your otherwise busy and hectic lifestyle. A child can sense that such a schedule is stressful to you and it can become a frightening or confusing element for them. Therefore, it's important to take time out to reassure them that you're never too busy for them.

Remember that your child's emotional well-being is just as important as their physical well-being, so do your part to ensure your child knows he or she is growing up safe, secure, treasured and loved.

You Can't Spoil a Child through Love

Though we all worry about spoiling our child, rest assured that you cannot spoil your child with love. Love doesn't spoil children. Love is imperative to a child's healthy development, and it's just not possible to love your child too much. They need caring adults to spend time with them, play with them, teach them, protect them, and enjoy life with them.

It's a parent's job to provide love, safety, and encouragement. The process of growing up provides children with lots of challenges. Try to listen openly and understand their situation, and communicate honestly with them when they have difficulties and letdowns in their life.

Set appropriate limits with your child and then adhere to them. Establishing limits with your child gives them a sense of safety and security. Sometimes parents do not set limits because they don't want to fight with their children. They don't want to cause bad feelings. They may beg a child to comply, or they may make a rule and fail to enforce it. They may nag without ever enforcing the rules. None of these behaviors help children. When your child fails to adhere or comply with the boundaries you've set for them, be firm, yet kind, in your response. This lets them know that you're serious about the rule but dedicated to helping and loving them. Bear in mind though that each child is different and what works for one child may not work for another. For example, one child may respond well to the direct approach of telling them a specific time to be home, where another child may need a gentle reminder that it's now time to come home.

Develop a firm, but kind, manner of making and enforcing your household's rules and expectations. There's no need to fear our children, and there should be no need to instill a sense of fear in our children in order to get them to comply.