

Building Self Worth in Children

"No parent starts out in the morning planning to make his child miserable. No Mother says to herself, "Today I'll yell, nag, humiliate and hurt my child whenever possible." On the contrary. Yet, we often find ourselves doing just that – and doing things we don't mean, in a tone we don't like."

The formation of self image begins very early in a child and is largely the product of relationships with parents and early caretakers. Whether a child will be a confident self-assured person or a fearful guilt-ridden one depends very much on the treatment she receives. Several ways parents and other caregivers can influence a child's feelings or self worth are:

- **AVOID LABELING** – labeling a child as bad or worthless is self-fulfilling
- **PROVIDE UNCONDITIONAL POSITIVE REGARD** – generous doses of love, tenderness & acceptance of the child even in the face of undesirable behaviour
- **REMEMBER YOUR OWN EXPERIENCES** – enhance the positive ones & ensure that you do not repeat the negative experiences you faced
- **CHEER** your child's accomplishments – provide lots of positive verbal feedback, offer attention, approval and appreciation for the desirable behaviour
- **BE INTERESTED & ATTENTIVE** – pay attention to your child and show interest in their activities
- **ACCEPT THE CHILD AS AN INDIVIDUAL** – avoid comparisons and competition with siblings & other children, accept the child as an individual in his own right, with his own abilities and limitations
- Help children be non-prejudiced by teaching concepts such as – all people are individuals worthy of dignity, & are interesting & important. Human variety is interesting, exciting and essential. Expose children to other cultures. Each child has a right to be what they are – respect and support the right to be different.
- **SET REASONABLE LIMITS** – set standards of behaviour that are clearly defined and enforce those limits, be reasonable with setting the limits and cast a vote of confidence on your child
- **FOCUS ON SITUATIONS & CONDITIONS** – if things go wrong talk about the situation not the child. Describe what you see, what you feel and what needs to be done. If things go well give recognition to the facts, comment on the accomplishment & the feeling of satisfaction.
- **TREAT THE CHILD AS A THINKING BEING**
- **ESTABLISH EYE CONTACT** – getting down to the child's level is important in developing self-esteem

- **DO NOT EMBARRASS CHILDREN** – children’s feelings are more easily wounded than an adult’s
- **HELP CHILD ACQUIRE SKILLS** – image-building skills can begin very early in life
- **BIRTHDAYS** – make birthdays a cause for celebration & build happy memories

The ability to feel comfortable about yourself – to feel you are a worthwhile person – is an important step in growing up. Before the child can like others, he must first be able to like himself. Because each child is different, they react differently to pressures & expectations put upon them by themselves & by others. In order for all children to “come out winners” parents must identify their child’s limits and abilities and slowly teach them to deal with each new stress that comes their way. Teaching them to cope is the greatest gift parents can give their children.

What is Resiliency?

- **Resiliency** is defined as the ability to readily recover & adapt to adversity. A resilient person demonstrates an ability to manage or cope with significant adversity or stress in ways that are both effective at the time, but which also help strengthen them against future adversity.

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