

# Foster a Sense of Self-Worth in Your Child



Few factors will be more important in deciding your children's future than their sense of self-worth. How they feel about themselves will affect their choice of friends, how they get along with others and how they develop their potential. In other words, a good solid self-image is basic to good mental health.

**Try not to call children names** or label them with words like "stupid," or "lazy".

**When things go wrong, focus on the behavior that was unacceptable** ..not "You are a bad girl," but, "when you yell so loud, you hurt my ears."

**Use compliments freely, as well as smiles and hugs.** Try to focus on the positive. If the child's behavior is creating problems, this can be trying but parents should work hard to find something to praise. For instance, wait

until the child doesn't spill any milk and then recognize her neatness. And remember, a smile and a hug can be as valuable as words in giving praise.

**Avoid conditional compliments**, like, "I noticed you made your bed, but it's still lumpy in the middle," or "I'm glad you picked up your toys, now just keep them picked up all the time." This kind of a compliment is more like a put-down.

**Don't put people down behind their backs.** Children may assume you say the same things about them. They might even believe that everyone is saying unkind things about them behind their back. This could undo all your efforts to build a solid self-image.

**Use praise that lets children know they have been helpful.** "When you put the napkins on the table, it helps us get ready for dinner." Enjoy the uniqueness of your children. Accept them just the way they are, not as you wish they were. Avoid comparing your child to other children or to siblings.

**Allow your children to build their own feeling of self-worth** through accomplishment. Doing things for them that they can do for themselves robs them of this opportunity.

**Spend time with your children.** Today's crowded schedules make this difficult, but even small amounts of special time each week work wonders for a child's healthy development.

**Avoid talking to others about your children in their presence.** The story you're telling may seem cute to you, but it's embarrassing to your child.

Adapted from: Parent Power Pages, Teaching Parents of Young Children: A curriculum in 12 Sessions Copyright 1996, Child Welfare League of America, Washington, DC and Prevent Child Abuse California.



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