

Helping You Navigate Your Journey Through Parenting

Your Child's Self Esteem



BY: **KIM DEMARCHI**

Self-esteem is one of the most talked about concepts in parenting and education today. Most of the clients I see want to know, "How can I give my child self-esteem?" That's a wonderful question,

and I'll get to that in a moment. First, let's clarify the definition of self-esteem.

Definition of Self-esteem:

Feeling unconditionally loved and capable in the world; Having a confidence and satisfaction in oneself... pride and belief in one's self.

It seems so straightforward, but how many parents truly love their children unconditionally..... without conditions? How do we, as parents, get our children to feel that unconditional love? And how do we make sure our children feel capable in the world? That brings us back to the original question, "How can I give my child self-esteem?" Simple answer: We can't. We can't GIVE our children self-esteem. All we can do is give our children opportunities to build their self-esteem.....to build the feeling of being loved and build the feeling of feeling capable.

ALL people have a basic need to feel valuable, important, listened to, etc...Adults have lots of ways of fulfilling this need to feel valuable. They work, volunteer, help friends, do for others, or even over-parent. Children have this same need to feel valuable. When they aren't given opportunities to be valuable to us, they sometimes create situations that can definitely reward them with attention, but unfortunately, a lot of time, it is negative attention. Our adult reaction (which usually isn't very loving) thus affects their self-esteem. So parents, be creative and find lots of ways for your children to be valuable to you. Start young. By 12-15 months, children are becoming eager to help you and feel more powerful. Is there anyone who doesn't enjoy feeling valuable and powerful?

Let your child feel valuable to you by:

Asking his advice I.e.: (Getting dressed for work) "Should I wear the striped tie or the solid tie?" (Prepping dinner) "Do you think we should have broccoli or green beans tonight?" (Buying a gift) "Do you think your friend would like a game or a football?"

Having her teach you something new I.e.: (Doing puzzle) "How do you figure out what pieces go where?" (Painting) "Will you show me how you made that paint color?" (On computer) "Can you teach me how to build a Lego car?"

Allowing him to help.....remember, our work is usually a child's play I.e.: Watering plants, sorting laundry, washing dishes, cooking, paying, shopping

Sharing your feelings with her, and let her be there for you I.e.: "I just received some sad news... can I have a hug?"

Following his lead in an activity or play I.e.: imaginative play, making a fruit salad, setting up a Hot Wheels ramp, an art project

Treating her with respect I.e.: Get down to their height when talking to them or raise them to your height Look them in the eyes Touch them gently Talk to them in a regular tone of voice, not in baby talk Knock on bedroom door before entering Avoid redirecting them in front of their friends

Let him hear you talk about him positively I.e.: "Jack has been really trying hard in math; I'm so proud of his effort." "Sally and Ben are beginning to really work out their problems all on their own." "Bobby took out the trash without even being reminded." "I'm so lucky to be his mom."

Everyone needs to feel valuable and worthy. Put some time and effort into thoughtful opportunities that genuinely increase your



child's self-worth. What allows a child to truly flourish is his belief in himself. Children value and believe in themselves to the extent that they have been valued and loved unconditionally for being uniquely who they are. Your child's judgment of himself influences the kinds of friends he chooses, how he gets along with others, the kind of person her marries, and how productive he will be. It affects his creativity, integrity and stability. Hi feelings of self-worth determine the use he makes of his aptitudes and abilities. The importance of self-esteem in your child's life can hardly be overemphasized. A new year with lots of new opportunities!

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