

Ways to Build Your *Child's* Self-Esteem

1. Encourage your child to set goals. Setting goals focuses his energy. Reaching them adds to his store of success experiences.
2. Help your child identify obstacles to success, then figure out ways to overcome them.
3. Encourage your child to take risks and challenges and stick with them until she is successful.
4. Avoid excessive protectiveness. Your child needs to be free to succeed and to make mistakes.
5. Set up situations where your child can be successful. Provide encouragement and support, but insist that he make the effort.
6. Set reasonable performance standards with your child to assure success. If your child isn't succeeding, is it because the expectations are too high?
7. Assist your child through "no-win" situations. Some problems have solutions that result in choosing the best of the worst. For example: Your daughter has an argument with her social studies teacher about an answer she believes is correct on her essay test. The teacher, shocked by her disrespect, tells her she needs to apologize if she plans to return to class the next day. Your daughter is determined that her answer is correct and her challenge was appropriate. However, the teacher holds the power in the classroom. Your daughter needs your assistance in recognizing a "no-win" situation and learning from it.
8. Make time to talk with your child one-on-one every day. You may wish to schedule regular "office hours" with each of your children.
9. Don't compare siblings. Value each of your children for his or her individual talents and abilities.
10. When things go wrong, be sure to separate your feelings about the child from your feelings about his behavior. (In other words, separate the deed from the doer.) Clearly describe what you see or perceive, how you feel, and what needs to be done. For example, you might say something like, "I get upset when school projects are left until the last minute. You need to put your project on your work plan so it gets done step by step."
11. When things go right, describe the child's accomplishment, express your feelings of satisfaction and pleasure, and then let your child draw her own conclusions about herself. For example, you might say, "You studied for your history test and got a B! That's a whole grade higher than last time. I feel proud and happy that you worked so hard and succeeded."
12. When your child puts himself down, first acknowledge what he is saying to validate his feelings, then state your own opinion. For example, you might say, "You think that you can't do anything right. But I know that isn't true. You're a good _____. And you can _____ very well."
13. Compliment your child. Set a goal to notice from three to five positive things about your child each day. Sprinkle your compliments out over the day.
14. Love your child unconditionally.

Diane Heacox, "Up From Underachievement"