

Building Self Esteem in Children

A child's self esteem is rooted in an understanding of his or her value especially as this is perceived and conveyed by his parents, teachers, and other 'significant others'.

Self esteem in a child or any person for that matter is:

- confidence in his ability to think
- confidence in his ability to cope with the basic challenges of life
- confidence in her right to be successful and happy
- the feeling of being worthy, deserving, entitled to assert his needs and wants
- confidence to achieve our values and enjoy the fruits of her efforts

Self esteem is a motivator. It gives an inner sense of one's *worth* as a person. It is a motivator of behaviour. It is life supporting and life enhancing.

"To trust one's mind and to know that one is worthy of happiness is the essence of self esteem"

Nathaniel Branden (1994)

"Self esteem is the mainspring that slates every child for success or failure as a human being"

Briggs (1975)

Here are some suggestions that will help with building self esteem in children:

- **Compliments** – Your praise must be sincere. Don't *say* something if you don't really *mean* it.
- **Discourage self-criticism.** Whereas criticism of his or her *actions* is acceptable, criticism of "*self*" is not.
- **Good manners** will soften a child's pride and give dignity to his/her presence in any crowd as h/she grows into adulthood. Children therefore need to display and experience good manners.
- **Make** the child the **Guest of Honour**

A child's self esteem - the understanding that he/she matters and has value - is built up every time he/she is recognized as special and is counted and treated as an important person.

- **Give** your child freedom to explore with the bounds of health and safety.
- **Avoid** making idle threats.

Making idle threats to a child is an extremely effective way of tearing down confidence and destroying self esteem. Idle threats instill fear in a child and fear eats away at confidence.

- **Tell** your child the **truth**.

The child who is told the truth knows what to believe about himself or her self. That is a critical factor in the formation of your child's self esteem

- **Listen** to your child especially when he or she requests it.
- **Tell** your child "*I love you*". Mean it and say it often. Say it with warmth.
- **Keep in mind** that a child with high self esteem is a child who believes in his /her own capacity to grow and adapt ...and that is a child of hope!

Note Well!

You are your child's mirror- a psychological mirror your child uses to build his/her identity.

Guidance Counsellor