



Self-esteem in children

Self-esteem is liking yourself, feeling worthwhile, believing in yourself and knowing what you do well.

Self-esteem gives children confidence to:

- try new things and try again when things don't go as planned
- do things that they might not enjoy or normally be good at
- face challenges rather than avoid them.

When children try new things, face challenges and bounce back, they learn and grow. This is why self-esteem can be an important part of child development.

Pre-schoolers and self-esteem

At this age, children often like to compare themselves with others. They might ask whether they're the biggest, fastest or best at whatever they're doing. You can have a big role in nurturing your child's self-esteem and helping your child value themselves for their efforts.

Here are ideas:

- **Give your child balanced feedback.** This is praising your child for giving things a go, doing their best or trying something new – not for being the 'best'. It encourages them to appreciate other people's successes too. For example, 'Well done for racing and giving it your best try – I'm proud of you'.
- **Show your child that you value them,** regardless of whether they win or lose something. For example, you can ask questions like 'Did you give it a good try?' or 'Did you have fun?' before you ask 'Did you win?'
- **Play simple board games or card games together.** Turn-taking games like these help your child learn how to play cooperatively and get along with others. This can give your child skills and confidence in social situations.

- **Encourage your child to help you with household chores** like setting the table or putting away laundry. This shows your child that you trust them with responsibility, which helps your child feel good about themselves.

Primary school-age children and self-esteem

At school, children might compare themselves with their friends and classmates. At this age, self-esteem tends to relate to many things, including how well children learn, how they look, how they do at sport and how easily they make friends.

Challenges at school might seem to dent your child's self-esteem because your child might feel less capable than others for the first time. But this will help them learn that they don't need to be perfect at everything to be loved and valued, feel worthwhile and believe in themselves.

Here are ways you can help:

- **Give extra love and cuddles at the end of the school day.** This helps your child remember you love them, regardless of how their day went.
- **Focus on the effort your child puts in and the courage it takes to try new or difficult things.** For example, 'I know you were worried about dancing in the concert, but you were so brave to give it go'.
- **Encourage your child to try again when things don't go to plan the first time.** You could say, 'Go on, give it another try – I believe you can do it if you keep trying'. This also builds your child's resilience.
- **Coach your child through tricky social situations.** For example, 'Try giving a big smile when you want to join in. People will want to play with you if you look friendly'. You could try role-playing these situations with your child first. This helps your child feel confident about making friends.
- **Give your child opportunities to try different things.** Listening to or playing music, drawing, painting, making things and reading for enjoyment are all ways to help your child value their abilities and build self-esteem.