

# Healthy Ways to Improve Your Child's Self-Esteem

By Lisa Goodwin, LCSW

A positive self-esteem is one of the most important traits to instill in a child, helping them feel empowered, resilient, and deserving of happiness – through life's successes as well as its setbacks. Here are some tips to boost your child's confidence:

- **Let your child know your love is unconditional.** Maybe they received a bad grade or misbehaved for the babysitter. Let them know that it doesn't change how much you love them. Help them fix the problem, forgive themselves, and move forward.

- **Be verbally and physical affectionate.** Whether it's a hug when they walk in the door or an "I'm proud of you" when they finish their homework, every positive interaction adds to your child's self-worth.

- **Offer accurate praise for true accomplishments and encourage your child to take pride in their victories, large or small.** Focus on efforts and attitude, rather than results. Their team might've lost, but they made some

impressive shots.

- **Create a safe and loving home environment that's a sanctuary from the outside world.** The more they can be themselves and feel accepted, the easier it is for children to accept and love themselves.

- **Encourage your child to explore, try new things, and meet new peers.** It could be at summer camp, a backpacking trip, or an after-school club: embracing the unknown proves to them that they are brave and capable.

- **Every day, spend 15 minutes with each of your children to focus on their feelings.** This includes their fears, challenges, happiness, sadness, excitement, or insecurities. It reassures your child that what they say and feel matter. Try asking about their most and least favorite parts of their day.

- **Be careful with the words you say.** Children are close observers and famous mimickers. Focus on the good in yourself and others, and respond in a positive way to challenges.

- **Make time to play, laugh, and have fun with your child: every day, sit on the floor together to play.** Children who feel connected to their parents feel good about themselves, and play is a powerful way to nurture that. Parenting will always have its difficult moments – so make fun ones a priority.

- **Allow your child to take healthy risks and make their own choices.** Maybe they want to try a new sport or audition for the school play. Cheer on their decision to put themselves out there.

- **Assign age-appropriate household chores.** From gardening to helping with the grocery list, your child will feel proud of the responsibility you've given them and the life skills they're learning.

*Lisa Goodwin, LCSW, is clinical director of the Masonic Center for Youth and Families in Covina, a nonprofit organization that offers therapeutic services for children, adolescents, young adults, and their families. Learn more at [mcyaf.org](http://mcyaf.org).*



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