

Self-Esteem

What is Self-Esteem

Self-esteem means you mostly feel good about yourself. It is confidence in one's own worth or abilities, self-respect.

Self-esteem can start as early as babyhood. It develops slowly over time. It can start just because a child feels safe, loved, and accepted. It can start when a baby gets positive attention and loving care. As babies become toddlers and young children, they're able to do some things all by themselves. They feel good about themselves when they can use their new skills. Their self-esteem grows when parents pay attention, let a child try, give smiles, and show they're proud. As kids grow, self-esteem can grow too. Any time kids try things, do things, and learn things can be a chance for self-esteem to grow (Kidshealth.org, 2021)

Self-esteem begins to form in early childhood. Factors that can influence your child's self-esteem include:

- Their thoughts and perceptions
- How other people react to them
- Experiences at home, school, work and in the community
- Illness, disability, or injury
- Age
- Media messages

Relationships with those close to them — parents, siblings, peers, teachers, and other important contacts are important to their self-esteem. Many beliefs they hold about themselves today reflect messages they have received from these people over time. (Mayo Clinic, 2020)

How Can I Tell If My Child Has Good or Low Self-Esteem?

Kids with self-esteem:

- feel liked and accepted
- feel confident
- feel proud of what they can do
- think good things about themselves
- believe in themselves

Kids with low self-esteem:

- are self-critical and hard on themselves
- feel they're not as good as other kids, frequently compare themselves to others
- think of the times they fail rather than when they succeed
- lack confidence

- doubt they can do things well

(Adapted from Kidshealth.org, 2021)

How to Cope with Low Self-Esteem?

1. Model confidence yourself- seeing you tackle new tasks with optimism and preparation sets a good example for your kids
2. Don't get upset about mistakes- help your child see that everyone makes mistakes and the important thing to do is learn from them, not dwell on them.
3. Encourage them to try new things
4. Allow kids to fail- trial and error is how we learn
5. Praise perseverance and celebrate effort
6. Set goals- articulating goals and achieving them makes kids feel strong. Help your child turn dreams into actionable goals by encouraging them to make a list of things they want to accomplish. Break down these goals with your child into realistic benchmarks.
7. Set them up for success at times- challenges are great for kids, but it is also important they have opportunities where they can be sure to find success
8. Don't compare your children to siblings or other children
9. Create a memory box for with your child- filled with different achievements and life milestones

(Adapted from Child Mind Institute, 2022)

Evidence-Based Coping Skills for Children

1. Make a list of things you are good at and a list of accomplishments
2. Practice the things you do well
3. Use positive affirmation and positive self-talk
 - a. End each day with saying 3 positive things about yourself and/or 3 good things about your day
 - b. Keep a self-esteem or self-love journal
 - c. "5 things I like about me" activity
4. Spend time with people who love you and practice doing what you enjoy
5. Spend time with people who love you and practice doing what you enjoy
6. Turn "I can't" into "I can"- does the little voice in your head tell you that you can't do something or your no good at it? Decide to change your mind. Think instead: "I'll try my best", "I can give it a try", or "I can handle this".

Evidence-Based Coping Skills for Adolescents

1. Challenge Negative or inaccurate thinking: Your initial thoughts might not be the only way to view a situation and our initial thoughts/false beliefs may make you feel worse about yourself or relationships around you — so test the accuracy of your thoughts. Ask yourself whether your view is consistent with facts and logic or whether other explanations for the situation might be plausible.
2. Adjust your thoughts and beliefs

- a. Use hopeful statements. Treat yourself with kindness and encouragement
 - b. Forgive yourself. Everyone makes mistakes- and mistakes aren't permanent reflections on you as a person
 - c. Avoid "should" and "must" statements. These can put unreasonable demands on yourself
 - d. Focus on the positive
 - e. Relabel upsetting thoughts
 - f. Consider what you've learned. Even if it was a negative experience
 - g. Encourage yourself
3. Use positive affirmation and positive self-talk
 - a. End each day with saying 3 positive things about yourself and/or 3 good things about your day
 - b. Keep a self-esteem or self-love journal

(Adapted from Mayo Clinic, 2022)

Additional Resources (Websites/Workshops/Books/Apps)

Parent Recommendations

- "Daring Greatly: How the Courage to Be Vulnerable Transforms the Way we Live, Love, Parent, and Lead" By Brené Brown
- "Building Your Child's Self-Esteem: 9 Secrets Every Parent Needs to Know" By Yvonne Brooks
- "The Gift of Failure" By Jessica Lahey

Children Recommendations

- "A Girl Like You" By Frank and Carla Murphy, and Kayla Harren
- "I Am Enough" By Grace Byers and Keturah A Bobo
- "Being Me: A Kid's Guide to Boosting Confidence and Self Esteem" By Wendy L Moss
- "Happy Confident Me Journal" By the happy confident company

Adolescent Recommendations

- "The Ultimate Self-esteem Workbook for Teens" By Megan MacCutcheon
- "Just As You Are: A Teen's Guide to Self-Acceptance and Lasting Self-esteem" By Michelle Skeen PsyD and Kelly Skeen
- "The Self Love Workbook for Teens" By Shainna Ali