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**Self-esteem**

**How can I help my child?**

Self-esteem is how a person feels about themselves. There are many pressures that can affect your child's self-esteem, for example: social media, bullying, exams, family problems and abuse.

**Children and young people with high self-esteem often:**

* Have a positive image of themselves
* Are confident
* Can make friends easily and are not anxious with new people
* Can play in groups or on their own
* Will try and solve problems on their own, but if not able to will ask for help
* Can be proud of their achievements
* Can admit mistakes and learn from them
* Will try new things and adapt to change.

**Children and young people with low self-esteem often:**

* Have a negative image of themselves, they might feel bad, ugly, unlikeable or stupid
* Lack confidence
* Find it hard to make and keep friendships, and may feel victimised by others
* Feel lonely and isolated
* Tend to avoid new things and find change hard
* Can't deal well with failure.
* Tend to put themselves down and might say things like "I’m stupid" or "I can't do that"
* Are not proud of what they achieve and always think they could have done better.
* Are constantly comparing themselves to their peers in a negative way.

Most children will have dips in self-esteem as they go through different stages or challenges in life. Starting a new school, moving to a new house, changes in the family and many other factors can affect a child’s confidence, but with support from parents and other adults they usually get through this.  
  
**Here are some things you can do that can really help:**

1. Show your child lots of love and be positive about them as a person – tell them what makes them special to you.
2. Set an example of having a positive attitude when faced with challenges.
3. Let them know you value effort rather than perfection. Children can miss out on lots because they don't try, because they are too anxious about not ‘succeeding’.
4. Encourage them to try new challenges and celebrate them for it. Phrases like "Well done, that was hard, and you managed it," are good. Make the steps small at first, then increase the challenges.
5. Help them set goals and make plans for things they’d like to accomplish. Keeping track builds good feelings about each milestone achieved.
6. Let them know they should not to be afraid to voice their ideas and opinions. It’s ok when people disagree, we all see things differently.
7. Give praise for their successes, and don’t focus on areas where they have not done so well. Get into the habit of asking them about three good things that went well today.
8. Reassure them it's OK to make mistakes and that it's all part of life. Getting it wrong is not the end of the world and happens to everyone and it's how we learn.
9. If you are unhappy with their behaviour, tell them, but make clear that you still love them.
10. Acknowledge their feelings and help them express their feelings in words.  For example, encourage them to say, "I'm upset because..." or "I feel happy when..."
11. Challenge them when they criticise themselves, so that they start saying things like, "yes I can do this," instead of "I can't do this".
12. Help children discover and develop their talents, through clubs, groups and activities.  Finding something they are good at provides a huge boost to their feelings of self-worth. Encourage them to express themselves creatively, through art, drama or music.
13. Get them involved with voluntary or community projects that make a difference to someone else to develop a more positive opinion of themselves.
14. Allocate 20 minutes each day to chat, laugh, and do something together. Young Minds  [#Take20 Parents' Hub](https://youngminds.org.uk/starting-a-conversation-with-your-child/) has 20 activities you could do in 20 minutes.
15. Talk to your child's school to see if they offer any mentoring or buddying schemes that your child might find useful.
16. If you are worried your child’s low self-esteem is affecting their day to day life, relationships or ability to learn and develop, it is worth seeking professional help. You can talk to your GP, and you can go without them if they would rather not come along with you. It can be helpful to write down what makes you think your child has low self-esteem, and anything you think might be causing it.

**A full Parents Helpline Guide is available via Young Minds**

**Books and resources that may be helpful:**

*You’re a Star, A child’s guide to Self-esteem - by Poppy O’Neil*

*Giraffes can’t dance – by Andreae Giles*

*I can do hard things – by Gabi Garcia*

*Relaxation and mindful techniques and stories*

Continue to liaise with your child’s school and seek support and advice as necessary

