

SELF ESTEEM CUNUNDRUM

Kids don't get self-esteem by hearing a mountain of feel-good statements of 'Well done' or getting certificates for mediocre performances. One of the tricks that successful parents use is to gradually teach kids the skill of self esteem building. Here are five skills for self-esteem building:

1. Self praise

The best strategy for kids of all ages and genders is the development of self praise. You can cue your kids into self praise by saying, ' Well, what do you think about that?' Challenge negative responses (*It's crap!*) and help kids be realistic appraisers of what they do.

2. Realistic self-talk

Many kids will default to putting themselves down when they don't do well. Help children understand their own self-talk. Get them to listen to their little voice in their head that says they can or can't do things and help them work out alternative messages that they can use if they are self-defeating. Teach kids that they can change the self talk from a negative to a positive response.

3. Encouraging others

When children and teenagers encourage others to do well they are internalising encouragement. They also begin to associate encouragement they give to others with themselves. So if a child praises a sibling for overcoming a learning challenge, such as improving his spelling at school, he is learning first hand about the impact that encouragement will have. He'll also experience that feeling himself.

4. Regulating feelings

If a child feels disappointed in himself he doesn't have to stay that way. It's important for kids to realise it is alright to have feelings, for them to be validated and not be overwhelmed by them. Kids learn to manage their feelings by observing modelling from their parents/carers. We can teach kids to regulate their stress levels, express their feelings productively, not impulsively or hurtfully.

5. Choosing friends

Peers give young people a sense of belonging and an increased sense of self-confidence. Talk with your child about friendships so you can offer support when there are difficulties and provide some ideas when needed. Give kids the opportunity to develop their own resourcefulness and to understand they can make smart friendship choices, broaden their friendship group, and walk away from challenging situations.