



Self-Worth – Raising Self-Worth in Children

Raising self-worth in children

Children start to become aware of themselves as individuals at quite a young age. As they grow and learn, their sense of self develops and so too does their ability to observe and make judgements. Their self-worth is affected by what they experience at home and in other environments, such as school.

What can diminish a child's self-worth?

Poor communication can lead to misunderstandings that can damage a child's sense of self-worth, especially as they grow older. Children aren't always capable of reading adult behaviour, but they will react to negative stimuli without necessarily understanding what it means. A child's self-worth may be affected by the following behaviours:

- Not taking an interest in them
- Negative facial expressions, such as frowning
- Sighing, such as when they ask us for something and we're too busy or tired
- Putting them off because we're busy
- Nagging them to go above and beyond what they normally do
- Berating them for being lazy, untidy or a nuisance
- Comparing them negatively to siblings
- Threatening to abandon them if they don't follow the rules
- Indicating that life was better before they showed up.

While some of these behaviours are overtly negative, such as threatening to abandon a child, some are the result of tiredness or exhaustion. Parenting is difficult, especially in the face of life's challenges. However, a child will consume an experience, whether positive or negative, and add it to their internal list that tells them who they are.

Challenging behaviour

Children, especially those that are very young, may lack the ability to communicate their feelings with any clarity. While they may not be able to articulate their thoughts, most can show their feelings through challenging behaviour. This may include:

- Becoming short-tempered or having a tantrum
- Poor emotional control in general
- Refusal to cooperate
- Aggression or bullying



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- Hyperactivity
- Withdrawal
- Being easily upset, fearful or worried
- Loss of appetite
- Avoiding new things
- Blaming others for their own actions
- Being easily influenced to poor behaviour by siblings or friends
- Putting themselves down.

While throwing tantrums can be seen as very challenging behaviour, withdrawal can be just as challenging. A child who no longer communicates with ease may be troubled by their thoughts and need guidance to be drawn out of their shell. Providing guidance is more vital than ever at these times. If a parent reacts in anger to a misdeed, it can shred the child's self-worth and only reinforce those unhealthy responses.

Raising self-worth

Creating an environment that encourages the growth of healthy self-worth requires parents and guardians to be constantly on guard. Here's what can be done to encourage the development of a child's self-worth:

- Show that they are loved
- Show that they are wanted and matter to you
- Show that they are accepted for who they are
- Allow them to feel they belong at home
- Allow them to express themselves
- Make them feel protected, safe and secure
- Give them your time
- Give them your attention
- Give them your affection
- Be interested in their life
- Encourage their interests (even if they seem weird!)
- Help them set life goals
- Accept they will have difficult life lessons
- Accept they might make mistakes
- Encourage them to try
- Celebrate the little wins
- Respect who they are as a person



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- Allow them to make decisions
- Listen to their ideas and give constructive feedback
- Encourage friendships
- Let them help you
- Share big life decisions with them
- Have faith in them.

In acting in a proactive and loving fashion, there is a probability that the child will grow to have healthy self-worth and every chance to become the successful members of society envisaged at their birth.

How you'll know that your child has healthy self-worth

When a child has a safe, supporting and loving home environment, a child will show signs of having or developing healthy self-worth. This may include:

- They make progress towards a goal and show no sign of quitting
- They want to be taught new things at home or school
- They get along with friends
- They like to help others, be kind to others, and want to give back
- They show compassion to people they don't know
- They are willing to help out around the house without (much!) complaint
- They put effort into their endeavours
- They tolerate frustrations well
- They can handle both positive and negative emotions well
- They act independently and without shyness
- They feel comfortable making decisions
- They will feel comfortable talking to you about anything
- They find reasons to laugh and smile

While it's possible that a child with low self-worth may show these behaviours too, they may conduct themselves cautiously and with need for clear approval from a parent. A child with healthy self-worth will act on their own accord and will do so with confidence.



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Where to get help

Always remember you are not alone. Your doctor or registered health professionals are there to help you.

Our online resource page also has a full list of organisations where you can get further information. <http://mindshift.org.au/suggested-links/>.

Things to remember

Raising self-worth in children depends on minimising negative stimuli and providing a safe, supporting and loving home environment. Negative experiences may cause challenging behaviour, but open communication will help a child adjust.

In summary

Raising the self-worth of children starts with recognising what constitutes a negative experience and recognising any challenging behaviour arising from it. With a supporting and loving home environment, parents and guardians can provide a space which allows the self-worth of a child to grow. Children with healthy self-worth have a powerful platform to launch into adulthood. Raising the self-worth of a child will lead to a child who is willing to act of their own accord, is confident and capable, and wants to try new things.

Updates and Further information

For the latest updates and further information please visit www.mindshift.org.au.

Our Mission

It is our mission to ensure that every person has access to the resources available to build healthy Self Worth, to have a positive sense of self and to find meaning in life.

Disclaimer

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change. All users are urged to always seek advice from a registered health care professional for diagnosis and answers to their medical questions.

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