

## Good Parenting Builds Your Child's Self-Esteem

In a sense, affection is the “I like you” part of parenting. Affection is a self-esteem builder for kids because it represents a direct confirmation of the young person and it contributes to the social-competence part of the self-esteem equation. Praise is the “I like—or I am proud of—what you are doing” part of parenting. Praise is also a self-esteem builder because it recognizes and reinforces competent behavior in a child.

When it comes to affection and praise, however, parents have a harder job than you might expect. While affection and praise are obvious self-esteem

boosts to children as well as great relationship strengtheners, we parents usually do not engage in these types of behavior nearly as often as we should. Adults have the tendency to give feedback to children when the parents are angry, but to keep quiet when they are happy with the youngster's behavior



### 1. Control Obnoxious Behavior

Our inherent biological perversity—the fact that we speak more when angry and don't praise or act affectionately unless we really, really feel like it—is why it's so important that you first learn how to control your child's obnoxious (Stop) behavior. When you begin to control obnoxious behavior, you are helping your child with her self-esteem in a very important and basic way. No one, child or adult is going to get along very well with others if she is continually arguing, whining (adults whine too!), teasing, yelling or putting others down. Obnoxious people have a hard time making and keeping friends. Learning self-control and not doing what you shouldn't is also a big part of the self-esteem element—character.

### 2. Encourage Positive Behavior

When you consistently encourage your children's positive (Start) behavior you are helping your child with his self-esteem because Start behavior involves learning how to independently manage your life. Kids who know how to get out of the house in the morning, complete their homework, feed the dog and get to bed—on their own—naturally feel better about themselves. Independence makes kids proud.

### 3. Strengthen Your Relationship

Your relationship with your child and your child's self-esteem are closely intertwined. Just about anything you do to improve your relationship will also improve your child's self-esteem. Having a good relationship with your child—and working to strengthen that relationship— is also a big part of the social competence element of self-esteem. As your kids get older and older, they will be required to get along with more and more other children as well as with more and more adults. In their relationship with you, your youngsters get their critical first experience with the ins and outs of getting along with somebody else.

There is another very good reason for working on your relationship with your child: Keeping your relationship positive, enjoyable and healthy will make the other two parenting tasks—controlling obnoxious behavior and encouraging good behavior—much, much easier.