

# 6 WAYS TO INCREASE YOUR CHILD'S CONFIDENCE



Children's learning is driven by curiosity, which in turn leads them to explore their environments. Children who explore their environments discover, practice and master new skills that will help them to move forward in the world. With mastery comes satisfaction, self-confidence, and self-esteem. Good self-esteem helps children to try new things, take healthy risks, and solve problems.

So... what can you do to increase your child's self-esteem, and confidence in their ability to take part in exploration and learning?

## 1 LISTEN & EMPATHISE

When you spend quality time with your child, you let them know that they are important to you. This can be as simple as listening to your child when they vent to you about a problem. Children do not always want us to problem solve for them, rather they are looking for connection and a listening ear.

- You can help your child by providing different options or choices.
- Validating your child's feelings – "*sometimes I feel upset too when I can't complete that task.*"
- Ask your child open ended questions about their experience – "*tell me more*", "*what was that like for you?*", "*what do you think would happen if you tried...*".
- Ask your child what they need from you to move forward.
- Teach problem solving skills – What am I feeling about the situation? What is the problem?  
Brainstorm some solutions, listing to what the result from each solution would be, then deciding on a solution.

## 2 MODEL THE ATTITUDE YOU WANT TO SEE

According to Social Learning Theory, children learn by watching those around them. Think about what you want your children to learn from you and try to model this behaviour. Your child will be watching you for cues on how to interact with the world while also listening to your words.

- Use phrases like – *"this is hard, but I'm going to keep trying."*
- Ask your child to help you brainstorm a solution to a problem.
- Focus on the lesson that was learned, whether there be improvement or not, and how it felt to try.
- Avoid expressing negative opinions of yourself or making comments such as *"I can't do this."*
- Encouraging messages – send positive text messages, write your child a positive note in their lunchbox, leave a positive note on the mirror

## 3 REMIND YOUR CHILD OF THEIR PAST STRUGGLES & ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Nobody is perfect, including yourself and your child. That means that mistakes will happen, as well as successes. What will help your child is the way you handle the situation. Prompt your child to remember a time where a task that they easily complete now, was more difficult. You can even provide examples of famous people who have overcome challenges and setbacks.

- Consider what your child's strengths are and how they got these strengths – facilitate a conversation about this.
- Integrate self-reflection into daily rituals, such as at the evening meal or on the way to school in the morning.
- Use reflective conversation prompts, such as *"it seems like..."* or *"I wonder if..."*
- Nurture gratitude by asking your child what went well for them that day or what they are grateful for.
- Keep it in perspective – have your child describe what the worst-case scenario might look like and discuss this. Use the circle of control to talk about what control your child has over the outcome (see image below).

## 4 BUILD CONFIDENCE BY ASSIGNING AGE/ DEVELOPMENTALLY APPROPRIATE TASKS

Set challenges for your child that are developmentally appropriate, so that you can help to increase confidence when they master a task. Every child matures at a different pace, so adjust your expectations based on what you know about your child's skills and talents.

- Teach responsibility by involving your child in the care of a plant or pet.
- Help them to learn life skills by allowing them to make their own cereal or toast, or other age appropriate tasks.
- Facilitate growth of personal hygiene by coaching your child on how to clean their room and take charge of cleaning their clothing.
- Complete tasks together, assigning your child an important part of the task, such as handing you the correct tools to fix an item or hosing off the soapy water when you wash the car.

## 5 BROADEN THEIR HORIZONS

Being connected to other people who care about you builds self-esteem and gives a sense of identity and place within your family. Being connected to friends and people in your community helps you to learn how to relate to others and it boosts your confidence.

- Help your child to increase their connections in different contexts, so they can see how others handle mistakes and failure – through sport, extracurricular activities, religion, playdates, or camps.
- Inspire your child – introduce stories to your child that might inspire them. Encourage critical thinking about the effort and steps that it took for their hero to succeed. Have discussions with your child about the steps they can take to reach their goals.
- Encourage questions – asking questions and asking for help are invaluable skills. If your child has a particular interest, encourage them to find an expert to talk to or ask for help with a problem.
- Explore – take the time to explore your local area, getting down low to the ground and examining rocks and riverbeds. Take a guided tour of your area and learn from locals and experts. Have open dialogue as you learn with your child.

