

Raising Your Kid's (and Grandkids) Self-Image

**By
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A great self-image is the single most important tool for successfully facing problems that arise in everyday life. Self image is essential to how your kid learns achieves, works, socializes and loves. It is the key to the way your child treats himself and is treated by others.

Self-image determines how your kid does in school and what he chooses to do with his life. To a child with a low self-image many options seem closed. Self-image determines who your kid chooses for friends. A kid with high self-image will deal better with peer pressure. There's been a lot of talk about saying no to drugs; almost no one has talked about what makes some children capable of saying no. The answer is a strong self-image. Can self-image really be taught? Anything that is learned can be unlearned, changed improved, and re-learned.

Here are some key concepts to communicate your wishes and raise your kids' self image:

Positive reinforcement.

Whenever you praise someone for doing something, you are giving him an incentive to do it again. Tell him what you'd like him to do, then have him try it. If he does what you ask them to do, praise him. "That's terrific. Great. I'm so proud". Give your kid at least four compliment a day. Be concrete and specific. Praise small things. Don't give pressure complements (I'm sure you're smart enough to get an A). Don't give left-handed complements (you don't look as bad as you usually do.) Find things to praise in your child's weakest area. Find the best in a bad situation. Don't be predictable. Surprise your child with unexpected praise.

Repetition.

Most learning takes place through repetition. The best way to learn a new skill is to practice it over and over again. You may want your child to learn to say good things about himself. But he may feel uncomfortable talking about himself in a favorable light. To lessen the discomfort, you may say ". Tell me something you like about yourself." Do this four times a day for a week.

Modeling.

One of the best ways to learn a behavior is to watch somebody else, especially someone you admire, demonstrate that behavior. You may want your child to be able to speak kindly of her appearance-not to be so hard on her looks. The most effective ways to do that is for you to model the correct behavior. "Well, I'm no movie star, but I'm pretty happy with the way I look." Your child will learn from your example.

Behavior rehearsal.

Knowing what to do in an uncomfortable situation can make a person feel competent. Before sending your kid out in the world to grapple with problems, help her rehearse behaviors that you'd like her to use. The feeling follows the doing. You may want your child to feel calm and secure. The first act in that process is to teach her to act calm and secure. Once she does, she will begin to feel as competent as she seems.

Parenting and grand parenting is a hard job. The rewards of a being a parent or grandparent are elusive. The only thing that makes your job do-able is the satisfaction you get from seeing your kid become competent, successful, and happy.

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