Tools for Your Child's Success.org

Confidence Age 8 Summary

Why Confidence?

Confidence simply means self-belief. But where does that confidence come from? It begins with a trusting relationship you work to cultivate with your child. Your bond with your child forms a solid foundation from which your child can explore the world. There are intentional ways to grow a healthy parent-child relationship while building confidence in your child to work toward their goals and succeed in school and life.

Tip: These steps are best done when you and your child are not tired or in a rush.

Tip Intentional communication and building a healthy parenting relationship will support these steps.

- Build on past success.
    - *"Remember last year when you had to sing a song in music class? How did you feel at the start? In the middle? How did you feel when you finished and the teacher liked it?"*
    - *"What helped you get through that learning challenge?"*
- Focus on challenging areas.
    - *"How can you start up a conversation with a classmate?"*
    - *"What does a good friend act like, say, or do?"*
    - *"How can you act in ways that will be a good friend to others?"*

- Cultivate a growth mindset. For example, when your child says, "*I can't do it!"* respond with:
    - *"You can learn anything with time, practice, and hard work."*
    - *"Remember when you did it even when you thought you couldn't?"*
- Talk with your child about superheroes or people that they admire. Ask: "What qualities do they have? What gives them the confidence to engage in any situation? What qualities do you already have?"

- Teach your child about self-talk. Look for a moment when you notice your child is telling themself a negative message like “I can’t do it.”
    - Use reflective listening for the unspoken message, such as, “I can see that you are telling yourself you can’t do it. Is that right? Telling yourself you can’t do it can hurt your chance of meeting your goal. How can we turn that message around to help you?”
    - Ask and invite your child to think about how to reframe that self-talk.
    - Reinforce your child’s response if it is positive or provide ways to reframe thinking: “I know if I work hard at this, I can figure it out.”
    - Practice the new language together. Provide specific feedback when you see your child using that new language using “I notice…” statements.

- Allow your child the chance to take steps to meet their challenges, taking responsibility for their tasks or relationships even if you know you could do it faster or better.
- Consider how to create conditions that support their success.
- Initially, practice may require more teaching, but avoid taking over and doing it for your child.

- Use “Show me…” statements with a positive tone and body language to express excitement and curiosity to ask them to demonstrate how they can work hard toward a goal. “*Show me you can introduce yourself when we arrive at the birthday party.”*
- Don’t move on quickly if your child shows interest in trying something new. Children often need more time to stick with a challenge or pursue a goal. Be sure to wait long enough for your child to show you they are competent. Your waiting could make all the difference in whether they can gain skills over time.
- Recognize effort using “I notice” statements like, “*I noticed how you took a brain break and then returned to your homework. That’s smart!”*
- On days when you can see your child is frustrated, proactively remind your child of their strengths. In a non-public way, you can say, “*Remember how you introduced yourself last week to a new friend? How can you use that experience here?”*
- Actively reflect on how your child is feeling when approaching challenges. You can ask questions like: *“How are you feeling about your free time at school?”* Offering a chance to talk about lunch and recess gives insight into your child’s social challenges.

Recognize Efforts

- No matter how old your child is, your positive reinforcement and encouragement have a significant impact.
- There are many ways you can reinforce your child's efforts. It is essential to distinguish between three types of reinforcement – recognition, rewards, and bribes. These three distinct parenting behaviors have different impacts on your child's behavior.
    - **Recognize** even small successes to promote positive behaviors and expand confidence: *"You asked your teacher your questions about your assignment--that took a lot of courage!"* Recognition can include nonverbal acknowledgment such as a smile, high five, or hug.
    - **Rewards** can be helpful in certain situations by providing a concrete, timely, and positive incentive for doing a good job. A reward is determined ahead of time so that the child knows what to expect like "If you demonstrate that you can advocate for yourself by talking to your teacher about your assignment, then we can consider you taking on bigger responsibilities like getting a hamster." (if you XX, then I'll XX) The goal should be to help your child progress to a time when the reward will no longer be needed. If used too often, rewards can decrease a child's internal motivation.
    - Unlike a reward, **bribes** aren't planned ahead of time and generally happen when a parent or those in a parenting role is in a crisis (like in the grocery store checkout line and a child is having a tantrum. To avoid disaster, a parent or those in a parenting role offers to buy a sucker if the child will stop the tantrum). While bribes can be helpful in the short term to manage stressful situations, they will not grow lasting motivation or behavior change and should be avoided.
- Build celebrations into your routine. For example, snuggle and read before bed after working through math homework together.

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