

Developing Resilient Self-Esteem in Your Children

- Avoid hyperbole – from three and up, kids know better.
- Avoid “constructive” criticism – teens rarely hear the positive message. There is very little “construction “ in “constructive” criticism.
- Praise effort, not product – research shows kids are very aware when they’ve tried hard or haven’t.
- Character generalizations wound – you’re “no-good”, “lazy,” “mean,” and the like; they hurt and may become self-fulfilling prophecies.
- Praise indirectly – many kids respond better to non-intimate praise; e-mails, notes, overheard conversations.
- “I’m proud of you” doesn’t cut it for most teens ...It feels like it’s about us, not them and appears to be coming from a “one-up” position.
- Honest, gently delivered feedback helps – but only if asked for by a teen.
- Praise privately – kids, especially teens, are hypersensitive about standing out in front of friends.
- Praise in detail – kids know you have really noticed when you mention the details.
- Encourage a passion – self-confidence generalizes.
- Manners matter – rudeness to parents lowers self-esteem in kids.
- Don’t “fix” – hear out a child’s self-doubts and continually give the message that you trust them to solve their problems. If you continually try to fix their problems, you give the message that you don’t seem them as confident to mend their own mistakes.
- Encourage good deeds – action that helps others makes kids feel good about themselves.
- Do not “punctuate” modest accomplishments. Your children will not believe your praise for significant accomplishments.