



Building Children's Self Esteem

1. Children need to be acknowledged for what they are:

You can do this by what you say:

- *You're a neat kid.*
- *I love you.*
- *I'm glad you're my son/daughter.*
- *I'm proud of you.*
- *You did a great job.*
- *I like the way you worked so hard on that.*
- *Come and tell me about.....*
- *Come and sit beside me for a while.*
- *How are you?*

And do:

- Make sure they get a turn.
- Help them individually for a moment.
- Pat the shoulder or back as you pass.
- A smile.
- A hug.
- Meet their eyes.
- Ask about something they previously told you.

2. Children need to be acknowledged for what they do:

I like the way you.....

You draw _____ really well.

This letter "F" is the best letter on the page.

3. We need a lot of praise before we can take in criticism without damaging our self esteem. Use the 5:1 rule. One piece of criticism to five pieces of praise and acknowledgement.
4. Don't use generalizations, they are rarely true, e.g. *"You never get to school on time,"* or *"Your work is always messy."*
5. No name calling. Remember labels are sticky, even the seemingly good ones can be harmful. *"You're a good girl."* – a child can infer this means *"I'm only OK when I behave like a little angel."*
6. No put-downs.

7. Don't put unrealistic expectations on children. Get to know the capabilities of children at each stage of development, e.g. adults often say to a child, "How would you feel if.....?" Little children don't know, and it is hard to catch a ball with one hand when you're six!
8. Don't compare one child with another.
9. Criticize the behavior, not the child. "*I didn't like what you did,*" instead of "*You're a bad boy.*" The latter puts down the whole child and doesn't leave room for hope. The first means –if I change my behavior, things will be better for me.
10. Give children a chance to learn. Behavior doesn't change overnight. Children are in the process of becoming, as we all are.
11. Put yourself on the child's side. "*We've got a problem here. What can we do?*" This gives the child a stake in what's going on.
12. When children feel threatened or frightened, they may react with anger. Here are some things children often feel fearful of:
 - *I might fail.*
 - *I might not be good enough.*
 - *I might not be safe.*
 - *I might not be loved.*
 - *I might be powerless.*
 - *I might not be wanted.*
 - *I might not be liked by other children.*
 - *I might be hungry.*
 - *I might not belong (to family, culture, peer group).*
 - *I might be shown up/embarrassed/shamed.*
 - *I might not understand.*
 - *I might not know the rules.*
 - *I might get hurt.*
 - *I might not know what you want of me.*
 - *I might lose something important.*
 - *I might have something important taken away.*

