

Parenting Tip 4 :

Boosting Your Child's Self Confidence

1. Encouragement is the key to boosting self-confidence

- encouragement is food, not medicine: display through attitudes, opinions, actions, level of trust, tone of voice, actions, words
- teach kids to view life experiences in encouraging ways
- encouragement follows empathy
 - “I know this seems difficult,” “I know what it's like to feel discouraged”
- goal is for child to apply self-encouragement

2. Change fear and worry to concern and caution

- Not: what if I can't/ forget/take too long/don't think clearly
- Yes: what do I need to brush up on?, what do I already know well enough?, what is the best time to practice what will be on the test?

3. Help your child get beyond perfectionism

- consider any progress toward a goal a success: learning from mistakes, trying hard, being aware of where improvement is needed, reducing errors through practice
 - help your child accept limitations, weaknesses: “nobody is perfect,” “it's not necessary to do it perfectly,” “it's alright to have that trait”
 - appreciate high skill, but don't stress it; acknowledge fun and effort: “this must have been fun to do,” “I'm glad that you enjoyed this,” “I can see you worked really hard on this,” “I'm glad you tried”

4. Teach your child to handle mistakes

- treat most difficulties, weaknesses, shortcomings, and poor performances as mistakes: “let's not call them failures, just mistakes”
- note decrease in number of mistakes: “you'll find it easier as time goes on”
- let kids know that mistakes are expected: “of course, there will be mistakes and problems”
- mistakes are tools for learning: “let's see what we can learn from this so next time can be better”
- mistakes are incompletions: “these problems need to be worked on some more,” “mistakes are reasons to continue, not stop”
- mistakes have causes: “let's see what's giving you the most trouble here”
- mistakes are not on purpose: “at the time it must have seemed the right thing to do,” “at times we all do things that we later wish we hadn't done”

- mistakes indicate temporary unreadiness, not that your child will never be able to do something: "it looks as if you weren't quite ready for that task yet"
- mistakes indicate effort: turn the idea around that mistakes indicate not trying hard enough: "if you weren't making mistakes, I wouldn't think you were trying at all"

5. Set suitable standards for your child

- base standards on your child's most recent performance, not what you were expected to do
- don't make goals too simple or easy

6. Express faith in your child's ability

- don't shield your child too much from stressful events
- trust your child's ability to cope: "you can do it," "I'm sure you can work this one out," "You can do it if you want to badly enough," "I know you'll be careful"
- emphasize your child's strengths: "this part looked easy for you," "your correct answers are circled in red"
- make seeking help safe (not discouraging), and profitable (be willing to help and follow through)
- give help, but not too much: "I'll help you if you think you need it after you've tried to do it yourself," "you do it yourself and I'll watch," "let me get you started," "would you like some help at this point," "would you like some help to finish up"
- teach your child to recognize and be satisfied with small gains

7. Help develop your child's sense of power over the environment (objects, plants, animals) or him/herself (by exercise, learning) and not over other people (by bullying, criticizing, winning in competition)

- "you cleaned up your room," "when you water the plants, they'll grow," "you can build just about anything with your tools," "the lawn really looks pretty since you mowed it"

8. Show appreciation and gratitude for what your child does

9. Avoid comparisons with siblings; compare the child only to him/herself

- "look how much your piano playing has improved," "how others are doing is not important; what is important is how you are doing"

10. Provide encouragement through helping your child develop healthy peer relationships

- show your child how to learn what interests other kids
- find new skills your child can develop that would include other kids
- help your child learn rules of games, as well as the skills involved
- teach strategies for making friends: inviting kids over and being a friendly host, showing empathy, talking rather than remaining silent, talking about what the friend wants to talk about, ask questions, let the friend choose first, do what the friend wants to do, return favors, give compliments, learn eye contact
- teach apologizing skills: admit responsibility, acknowledge the other person's unhappiness, I'm sorry for ..., ask for forgiveness, affirm your friendship, make amends, think about what to do differently next time.