



Did You Know...?

27

About Self-Esteem and Student Success

Parents Reaching Out connects with families, schools and communities in New Mexico. We offer information from many reliable sources. We thank the Parent Education Network, a project of Parents Helping Parents of Wyoming, Inc. for permitting us to share their PEN Notes publications in this information series.

Self-Esteem:

Self-esteem is how we value and perceive ourselves and how valuable we think we are to others. Self-esteem affects how we trust others, our relationships, our work and all aspects of our lives. Positive self-esteem gives us the strength and flexibility to take charge of our lives and grow from our mistakes without feeling rejected.

Low Self-Esteem

...is a debilitating condition that keeps individuals from realizing their full potential. Low self-esteem makes us feel unworthy, incapable and incompetent. People with low self-esteem feel so poorly about themselves that they cause continued low self-esteem.

Signs of self-esteem:

- Self value
- Value to others
- Trust in others
- Relationship with others
- Taking charge of our lives without the fear of rejection

Signs of Low Self-Esteem

- Negative view
- Mistrust others
- Blame others
- Fear of taking risks
- Dependent
- Feeling of being unloved
- Fear of being ridiculed

How Low Self-esteem starts:

Low self-esteem is not something you are born with; it is learned. It's the result of filtering opinions, comments, suggestions, looks and actions of those around us. For example, if a child grows up with parents who are critical, he may learn he will never do well enough.

If a child grows up with neglectful parents, he may grow up feeling unworthy of care. These feelings may last a lifetime even though others may love and care for her or him. The low self-esteem will filter out the good; the child will hear only the bad and live up to the expectations of a person with low self-esteem. This behavior becomes "second nature."

It takes a whole village to raise a child.

How to raise self-esteem:

Letting go of low self-esteem feelings and behaviors that have built up over a lifetime is not an easy task. It takes time and hard work and may even involve professional counseling. There are some simple, positive-thinking techniques that can help build self-esteem. These are called affirmations. Affirmations are encouraging messages we can give ourselves every day until they become part of our feelings and beliefs.

We must begin every day looking in the mirror and giving ourselves affirmations.

Affirmations:

I respect myself and others.

I am loveable and likable.

I care about others.

I am a good friend to myself and others.

I am confident and it shows.

I am creating loving, healthy relationships.

I accept myself just as I am.

I look great.

Do's for building children's self-esteem:

- Notice them
- Smile at them
- Listen to them
- Seek them out
- Remember their birthday
- Ask them about themselves
- Look in their eyes as you talk to them
- Be honest
- Be yourself
- Share their excitement
- Follow them when they lead
- Send them a postcard
- Know where they are
- Delight in their discoveries
- Discuss their dreams and nightmares
- Suggest better behavior if they act out
- Stay with them when they are afraid
- Take time—concentrate only on them
- Give them space when they need it
- Kneel, squat or sit so that you are at their level
- Meet their friends and parents
- Encourage win-win situations
- Give them lots of compliments
- Praise more and criticize less
- Ask for their opinion
- Applaud their accomplishments
- Inspire their creativity
- Become their advocate
- Include them in conversations
- Attend their concerts, games or events

"Did You Know...?" fact sheets are developed by Parents Reaching Out in collaboration with the New Mexico Public Education Department under a grant from the US Department of Education Office of Innovation and Improvement. Views expressed do not necessarily represent the policy of the US Department of Education and should not be assumed to be an endorsement by the Federal Government.