

How to value your child



Children - and especially teenagers - go through times when their self-esteem hits their boots. They may be finding it difficult to keep up with school work, or a lack of co-ordination might mean that they just can't make it in any sport. Perhaps they're being bullied - even in a minor way it can dent their confidence - or a sibling might be achieving great heights, which makes them feel inferior.

All children need to know that they are valued. Valued for being who they are, not for what they can achieve. So how can you let your child know that you value her or him?

Do emphasise their good points. Even if they perform badly at school and in sport, they are individuals in their own right and are sure to have many good points. Let them know what those good points are! A couple of parents have told Care for the Family how they have written an alternative report, or a CV, for their child, showing them how they are appreciated as a person.

Don't compare them with others. They are comparing themselves all the time, in their own heads - they don't need your help! If you have to compare them, do it favourably.

Do listen to what they have to say. If you laugh at them or make fun of their opinions, they are less likely to open up to you next time. Even if they want to tell you six times exactly how their favourite footballer scored the winning goal, keep listening! And if they come to you with a problem, however minor it appears to you, sit down and take them seriously.

Don't criticise more than you praise. Children are built up by praise and will go on doing what they are praised for - to get more praise! If they are criticised all the time, they are more likely to go on doing what they are criticised for. At least that way they get attention.

Do spend quality time with them, individually. This is particularly important if a sibling is an achiever or has special needs, requiring much of your time. Have a special Saturday morning breakfast in a café, or go to see a film - just the two of you. Or you could go on a Care for the Family The 1-2-1 Challenge weekend to build up your relationship!

Don't miss school open days, exhibitions, sports days, unless it is impossible for you to be there. If you have to give up something to go to their school, your child will notice that, appreciate it, and know you have put them first.

Attempt to do all this, and your child will feel good about themselves. Their self-esteem will rise up out of their boots and they'll be able to walk around with their head held high!



Just one more word, though: there will be times that you forget all the above. You're only human after all. You're tired, busy and irritable, and you shout at your child. Your child turns away, dispirited and dejected. What do you do? Tell yourself you're a failure and that you may as well give up? No! The last thing you want is for your self-esteem to descend to your boots! We've all done things we regret and we don't need to drag heaps of guilt around with us.

Instead, go after your child, apologise, explain that the way you reacted wasn't her/his fault - and start building your child up again as soon as possible. It will work - every time.

Here is an example of a CV you could adapt for your child:

Curriculum Vitae

Name: Sam Smith Age: 12

Personal Profile:

- Helps with little brother
- Thoughtful when family members are ill
- Cares for other people
- Encourages friends when they are down
- Brings me a cup of tea without me asking
- Helps elderly neighbour with his garden

Achievements:

- Worked hard to make it into middle maths group
- Got a speaking part in school play
- Joined junior choir
- Designed posters for youth club socials
- Makes brilliant beans on toast!

January 2004.

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