



# Help Your Child to Have a Strong Self-Esteem

Here is a list of ways to convey the message *“You are worthwhile”* to your children.

This list could fill a hundred newsletters, since the ways to raise responsible, happy children are limited only by our imaginations. Here are some places to begin.

**Tell your child on a regular basis that you love her.** Actually say the words. If you think, “I don’t have to tell her. She knows,” you are wrong. It doesn’t count if you think it but don’t say it out loud.

**Tell him that you are glad he is your child.** Say the words and mean them. If you don’t feel it, there is something wrong and you should find out what’s going on. We all have moments when we have a hard time getting in touch with our positive feelings for our children. I’m not talking about those times. I’m talking about in general, most of the time, if you’re not feeling good about being your child’s parent, something is wrong. He will never feel good about himself if he senses that you are not connected to him.

**Give your child an example to follow.** Take the time to teach her the steps. Kids need models. It’s unfair to expect that she will know what to do in her daily life if you haven’t shown her how to do it.



**Spend time with your child.** If you are absent most of the time, he notices, and he probably thinks it’s because he isn’t important enough.

**Look at her when you speak to her.** This conveys, *“This is important and you are important.”*

**Look at him when he speaks to you.** This conveys, *“What you are saying is important. You are important.”*

**Explain why.** It takes more time, but it conveys that she is important enough to spend the time helping her understand. When you explain why, you are also saying, *“I understand that you need to know why. I am going to help you meet your needs.”*

**When he tells you about something that happened, ask him how he feels about it.** Take the time to listen to his answer.

**When you ask a question, encourage her to elaborate.** Say, *“Tell me more about that,”* or ask, *“What was that like?”*

**When you ask a question, don’t interrupt when she is answering.**

**When you ask a question, watch your responses.** Don’t disagree or criticize his answer. This teaches him that it isn’t safe to be candid and will make him edit what he tells you.

**Take her seriously.**

**Participate in the driving.** The kids whose parents never

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compliments of Dr. Jonathan Isaacson,  
Director of **The Marriage Clinic**

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help with the driving feel bad about themselves.

**Say no when you need to say no.** Kids need to know there are limits.

**When you say no, explain why.**

**When you say yes, explain why.**

**Set a positive example with your own behavior.** You can only expect her to behave with dignity and self-respect if she sees you doing it.

**When you lose your temper or make a mistake, apologize.** Say that you are sorry, be specific about what you are sorry for, and give him a chance to respond.

**When you know that you have disappointed him, acknowledge it.** Ask him how he feels about it.

**Spend time alone with her.** Arrange activities for just the two of you.

**Ask him what he would like to do.**

**Give her a private space where she can express herself.**

**Respect his privacy.**

**If he did a good job on something, say so.**

**If she didn't do such a good job on something, point out what she did well.**

**After a disappointment or failure, ask, "What did you learn from the experience?"**

**When you are giving feedback, describe specific behavior.** For example, "I like how you asked the question so politely" or "You still need to pick up the towels off the floor."

**When there is a problem, focus on the issue, not the child.** For example, "You didn't do the last ten problems

*on this assignment" is more constructive than "You never finish anything."*

**Ask what he thinks.**

**Let her be the one to choose the restaurant, movie, or activity some of the time.**

**Ask him to go with you on routine errands just because you want to spend some time with him.**

**Touch her when you talk to her.**

**Give him a hug at least every few days.**

**Go in and say goodnight before she goes to sleep.** (This is easy to forget once they become teenagers.)

**Look up and smile when he walks into the room.**

**Introduce yourself when she is with a new friend.**

**Ask her to tell you about the book she is reading or the movie she just saw.**

**Review child development literature regularly to stay updated on what is normal at each age and stage.** It is important to recheck your standards and expectations to be sure they are realistic for the child's age and individual abilities.

**Look for ways to maintain your own self-esteem.** If you are unhappy, discontent, or disappointed in how your life is turning out, it will be difficult for you to build the self-esteem of your children.

**Every child needs to be the object of a parent's undivided attention on a regular basis.**

**Make certain that your body language matches your words.** If they are out of synch, he will be aware of it.

**Be yourself. Tell the truth.**

**Be appropriate.** You don't have to say everything that is on your mind or tell him things he isn't ready to know.



**Dr. Jonathan Isaacson** is a licensed clinical psychologist, specializing in pre-marital and marriage counseling. He also specializes in helping singles choose healthy partners and loving relationships. With proven and timeless principles and strategies, you can create a loving marriage that will last a lifetime. Dr. Isaacson guides his clients to resolve couples distress and overcome challenges. He offers programs on marriage/relationship enhancement that includes a couple's personality and relationship profiles. Dr. Isaacson helps individuals overcome psychological and emotional problems which only become exacerbated in a relationship. He is the Director of **The Marriage Clinic** in Beachwood, Ohio and can be reached at **216-292-4500**.