

HOW TO HELP YOUR CHILD BUILD ON THEIR SELF ESTEEM

HELP SHEET 7

Based on information from the National Centre for Learning Difficulties www.ncld.org

Throughout life, self-esteem is a critical and often elusive ingredient for happiness and success. Positive self-esteem helps everyone feel better about themselves, their accomplishments, and their potential to succeed in the future. Some children with dyslexia can struggle to develop or maintain positive self-esteem, which may in turn contribute to a hard-to-break cycle of self-doubt, frustration, and failure. As we all know, memories of threats to self-esteem can linger for years, even decades. Children can build on their self esteem when their parents/carers provide them with intentional, effective instruction and meaningful support.

Characteristics that can contribute to feelings of low self-worth:

Communication style and social awareness

In conversation, does your child have difficulty judging when or how it is appropriate to participate? Is he or she seemingly unaware that their behaviour can be annoying to others?

Self-knowledge

Your child may have trouble understanding his or her strengths and weaknesses. Are they able to reflect on and evaluate their behaviour in social interactions?

Language

They may have trouble expressing their thoughts verbally.

Self-perceived social status

If your child has trouble figuring out how he or she fits into their peer group, they may withdraw from social situations, become passive, or “stick out” in a crowd for trying too hard to fit in.

Self-perceived ability to effect change

Your child may be prone to believing that they are not capable of controlling their own successes, that luck or fate is responsible for the outcome of a situation and not their own efforts.

Being diagnosed with dyslexia can often give a child a sense of relief—that they weren’t “stupid,” that there were real and legitimate reasons behind their struggles in school. Once they understand how their dyslexia may impact not only the way in which they learn, but other areas of their life (e.g., social skills), they can use that self-awareness to rely more on their strengths and become more proactive about working around their weaknesses—a mindset that help the maintain positive self-esteem.



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How Parents/Carers Can Help

- Be empathetic. See the world through your child's eyes.
- Communicate with respect. Don't interrupt or put them down; answer their questions.
- Give them your undivided attention. Children feel loved when parents spend one-on-one time with them.
- Accept and love your child for who they are. By doing this you are helping them to feel more secure in reaching out to others and learning how to solve problems on their own.
- Give your child a chance to contribute. This communicates your faith in their abilities and gives them a sense of responsibility.
- Treat mistakes as learning experiences. Children whose parents overreact to mistakes tend to avoid taking risks, then end up blaming others for their problems.
- Let your child solve problems and make decisions. Avoid telling them what to do; encourage them to come up with solutions to problems. Support positive relationships and social skills. Children with dyslexia can gain confidence and feel better about themselves when they develop competency in these areas.. Encourage them to not feel ashamed or embarrassed that they have dyslexia.

Extra-curricular Activities

If a child is continually struggling or failing at school, an extra-curricular activity that they enjoy can be a good way to develop self esteem. Things like sport, art classes, or some other type of hobby can have a very positive effect. Physical activities like football, karate or gymnastics can also help coordination, release frustration, and allow children to develop confidence in their own abilities. Regardless of what it is, some form of activity away from school that a child can enjoy and succeed at can be very beneficial.

Be Realistic

Parents always want the best for their children and this might lead them to put pressure on their children to succeed. This is not necessarily a bad thing but for dyslexic children sometimes this pressure can become overwhelming. For example, a dyslexic person may never want to read for pleasure because reading is so unpleasant for them. So a parental expectation that a child will develop the skills to read for pleasure may be unrealistic. Thus it is important for parents to put the right type of pressure on their children so that they develop the skills they need to function effectively in society. But by the same token parents need to be realistic about what their dyslexic child can reasonably achieve.

Positive Reinforcement

Emphasize your child's strengths. When your child feels a sense of accomplishment and pride, they will have more confidence to persevere when they face challenges. Praise your dyslexic child when they succeed and to let them know when they have done well. Constant praise and positive reinforcement is important in building self esteem. Children need to be encouraged to keep trying in a positive manner and a child is far more likely to keep trying at tasks they are struggling with if they know they will receive praise and encouragement.



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