



Building Self-Esteem in Children

Most parents have heard that “an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure” and it’s especially true with self-esteem in children. All children need love and appreciation and thrive on positive attention. Yet, how often do parents forget to use words of encouragement? No matter the age of children or adolescents, good parent-child communication is essential for raising children with self-esteem and confidence.

Self-esteem is an indicator of good mental health. It is how we feel about ourselves. Poor self-esteem is nothing to be blamed for, ashamed of or embarrassed about. Some self-doubt, particularly during adolescence, is normal— even healthy— but poor self-esteem should not be ignored. In some instances, it can be a symptom of a mental health disorder or emotional disturbance.

Parents can play important roles in helping their children feel better about themselves and developing greater confidence. Doing this is important because children with good self-esteem:

- Act independently
- Assume responsibility
- Take pride in their accomplishments
- Tolerate frustration
- Handle peer pressure appropriately
- Attempt new tasks and challenges
- Handle positive and negative emotions
- Help other peers

Words and actions have great impact on the confidence of children. Children — including adolescents — remember the positive statements parents and caregivers say to them. Phrases such as “I like the way you” or “you are improving at” or “I appreciate the way you” should be used on a daily basis. Parents also can smile, nod, wink, pat on the back or hug a child to show attention and appreciation.

What else can parents do?

- **Be generous with praise.** Parents should develop the habit of looking for situations in which children are doing good jobs, displaying talents or demonstrating positive character traits.
- **Teach positive self-statements.** It is important for parents to redirect children’s inaccurate or negative beliefs about themselves and to teach them how to think in positive ways.
- **Avoid criticism that takes the form of ridicule or shame.** Blame and negative judgments are at the core of poor self-esteem and can lead to emotional disorders.
- **Teach children about decision making and to recognize when they have made good decisions.** Let them “own” their problems. If they solve them, they gain confidence in themselves. If you solve them, they’ll remain dependent on you. Take the time to answer questions and help children think of alternative options.
- **Show children that you can laugh at yourself.** Show them that life doesn’t need to be serious all the time and that some teasing is all in fun. Your sense of humor is important for their well-being.





What to Do When Depression Enters a Relationship

Each year, depression affects an estimated 15 million Americans and countless numbers of loved ones. It can test even the most secure of relationships. The good news is that depression is very treatable and by taking the appropriate steps to combat the illness, your relationship can survive.

The pressure of being in a relationship can feel overwhelming to someone living with depression. When you're struggling with an illness that makes you tired, sad and generally uninterested in life, often the last thing on your mind are the needs of others.

Equally frustrating and emotionally draining is trying to maintain a relationship with someone who's depressed. It's hurtful and confusing when loved ones increasingly isolate themselves, pull away and reject others' efforts to help. These feelings and reactions can damage relationships, whether they're with spouses, partners, children or friends

Steps to Overcome Depression and Keep Your Relationship Healthy

The most important step toward successful recovery is to seek treatment. With the appropriate combination of "talk" therapy and medication, people with depression can achieve remission (virtual elimination) of symptoms and reconnect with life and with relationships.

If you're experiencing symptoms of depression:

- **Share your feelings with others as much as possible.** Your reluctance to talk about how you feel only creates distance between you and your loved ones. It's especially important to keep the lines of communication open during trying times.
- **Let your partner know that you still find him or her attractive.** An affectionate touch and a few reassuring words can mean a lot, even if you don't feel inclined toward more intimate relations.
- **Consider couples or family counseling.** Your willingness to talk about your relationship and how it may be affected by depression speaks volumes to family members and loved ones about their importance in your life.

- **Keep working toward recovery.** Today's treatment options make recovery more realistic than ever. To resolve your symptoms, a combination of medication and "talk" therapy may be recommended. Your physician will help you determine the right levels of medication and how long you should stay on them.

If you're in a relationship with someone experiencing depression:

- **Offer support, but don't try to take control.** Remember, your role is to encourage your loved one to seek professional help. Encourage your partner not to settle for partial improvement and explain that with the right treatment, people with depression can still live a fulfilling life. Keep in mind that although your loved one may seem overwhelmed, incapable or frustrated, you can't reconstruct his or her life.
- **Give advice in the form of options.** For example, recommend a physician for your partner to see or suggest support groups you think may be a step toward alleviating his or her symptoms.
- **Try your best to understand the illness.** Don't belittle the person by saying things such as "Snap out of it," "Get over it" or "Everyone feels down now and then." Try your best to understand the illness. Remember, depression is a real illness that should be taken seriously.
- **Recognize that depression is not rational.** It is painful to be rejected, scorned or ignored, but this may be how your loved one responds to your efforts to help.
- **Care for yourself.** Carve out time to pursue your own interests and to socialize even when your partner can't join you. You might also want to consider seeking individual counseling.

