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BUILDING SELF-ESTEEM IN YOUR CHILD

Self-esteem begins developing at birth. Babies get messages about their self-worth by the kind of love and care they get. As a child grows, he or she watches and listens for cues from other people to see what they think about him or her. The way a child learns to treat others is affected by the way the child is treated. You can encourage and support the development of positive self-esteem in your child. Help your child develop a healthy personal attitude as well as a positive attitude about the world.

Techniques to Build a Positive Self-Concept

- Respond to your baby's needs quickly, patiently and lovingly. Don't be afraid to pick up a crying baby and comfort him or her. You can't spoil a baby by meeting his or her needs!
- View your child as a unique individual. Avoid comparing one child with another. Feelings of acceptance and love are necessary for a healthy self-concept.
- When children misbehave, find out why. Is he or she tired, bored, hungry? Be understanding and respectful of the reasons behind behavior. Try to spend special time alone with each child as often as possible.
- Provide ways for the child to feel successful. Give your child jobs that aren't too easy or too difficult. Give honest praise and encouragement to your child. When the child feels like a capable and competent person, he or she has good feelings.
- Teach the child how to deal with angry, unhappy feelings. Children need to learn to express feelings in socially acceptable ways. Teach them to use words instead of hitting and biting.
- Accept the child's unpleasant emotions. Children need to know that everyone feels sad or angry at times. We can't help how we feel, but we can help how we act on our feelings. Remember that it takes time to learn to express feelings appropriately. Try not to overreact to strong words from your child like "I hate you."

- Give the child plenty of warmth and physical affection. Children thrive in an atmosphere of love and respect. Use your tone of voice and facial expressions to communicate with your child. An unemotional face saying, "That's great" does not convey the message. Make eye contact and let your child see and hear delight, pride, enthusiasm and love in your face, tone and words.
- Use praise and encouragement. Tell your child he or she is great! Praise singles out the product or behavior: "That's a beautiful picture" or "You're terrific." Encouragement focuses on the process: "You are working hard," or "You tried your best."
- Display your child's work. Taping artwork or homework on the wall or refrigerator tells a child that you value his or her efforts.

For more information, contact
the family life educators at 605-322-3660
or familylifeeducators@avera.org

15-AMCK-0770 REV040319