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EMPOWERING YOUR CHILDREN WITH SELF-ESTEEM

Do you remember a particular moment in your life growing up where you felt completely loved? Do you remember a moment where you felt unloved? We all carry with us the memories that are imprinted in our sub consciousness and those memories directly impact our development. But do we stop to fully consider the influence we have as parents in shaping the minds of our children, and more specifically the effect we have on their self-esteem? There are many factors that affect a child's self-esteem, but by far the most significant factor is their life within the family. Other factors affecting self-esteem include areas where there is less control such as peer involvement in school, education, and social activities. We all know how hurtful the world can be, but we can at least nurture a healthy self-esteem at home.

Here are some ways to positively affect your children's self-esteem:

- Have clear expectations and boundaries so children know what's acceptable and what's not. Make them accountable; make them count.
- Be consistent in meeting the needs of your children. Be true to your word.
- Stay involved. The more parents are involved with their children the higher their self-esteem.
- Show unconditional love. Accept your child's strengths and weaknesses equally.
- Respect your children, and combine this with an authoritative parenting style. Children need leaders.
- Model positive behavior. Children imitate what they see.
- Show affection and tell them you love them. You cannot say you love them too often.
- Show praise often and celebrate small victories.

Just as there are positive ways to affect your children's self-esteem, there are negative experiences that can affect a child's subconscious mind and have a lasting impact on them. The following are situations to avoid:

- Avoid name calling. If we are consistently labeled as dumb, stupid, lazy, fat, etc., we begin to believe that about ourselves. It becomes our reality. Poor self image results in poor self-esteem.
- Avoid allowing your children to be in a situation where they make repeated mistakes, errors or failures. It's far better to set them up for success, whatever that looks like for them. Nobody likes to be beaten down, much less a child who is learning his or her identity.

- Avoid criticism and negative humor when communicating with your children. Self confidence is shattered when we're repeatedly told we're "not good enough".
- Avoid behaviors that elicit embarrassment in your children. Frequent embarrassment can cause negative thinking patterns that are detrimental to healthy self-esteem.

Our children are indeed our future. We have tremendous responsibility as parents to take a leadership role in the upbringing of our children to ensure that the next generation is equipped for the challenges before them. We have an opportunity to empower our children with an amazing tool by giving them the gift of positive self-esteem.