

Educating a child is a team effort

Parents are a key component in the education process. When children can count on attention at home, they have a greater sense of security and self-worth. This helps them not only to succeed in school, but prepares them for life as well. The suggested activities in this brochure are ones that can be used when you spend one-on-one time with your child.

The WVEA is committed to working with schools, communities and parents to increase parental involvement. We know that encouragement from home can make a world of difference as a student progresses through school. Parents and teachers working together to help children build their self-esteem will enhance their ability to learn. We hope that you have found the information in this brochure* helpful and invite you to request others in WVEA's "Partners in Learning" series.

Additional information can be found at the following websites:

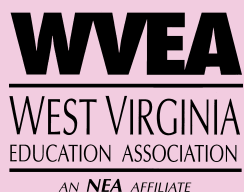
National Association for Self-Esteem
www.self-esteem-nase.org

National Education Association
www.nea.org/parents

United States Department of Education
www.ed.gov/pubs/parents/

Partners in Learning

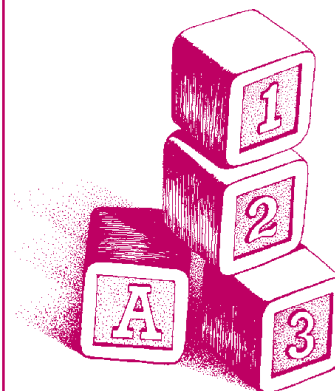
Other brochures in this series include:



- Get Involved in Your Child's School
- Homework
- Motivation for Learning
- Reading...The Key to Learning
- Summer Learning Activities
- MegaSkills®
- Bullying

*Brochure material adapted from New Jersey Education Association Self-Esteem Training.

Essential Elements of Self-Esteem



*When children live with criticism,
they learn to condemn.*

*When children live with hostility,
they learn to fight.*

When children live with shame, they learn to feel guilty.

When children live with ridicule, they learn to be shy.

When children live with tolerance, they learn to be patient.

When children live with encouragement, they learn confidence.

When children live with security, they learn to have faith.

When children live with praise, they learn to appreciate.

When children live with fairness, they learn justice.

When children live with approval, they learn to like themselves.

*When children live with acceptance and friendship,
they learn to find love in the world.*

—Anonymous—



Partners in Learning

The poem on the cover is all about the impact we have on children's beliefs about themselves. We see those beliefs in their actions, which are based on their self-perceptions and self-esteem. This brochure provides ways for school staff and families to work together to enhance children's self-esteem. Specifically, we will explore the motivations that drive our actions and how our actions impact the lives and self-esteem of children. We will accomplish that task by taking a look at essential elements and keys to remember followed by practical suggestions on ways to enhance your child's self-esteem.

Essential Elements of Self-Esteem – Key Points to Remember

- **Security** – A child with a sense of security feels safe and knows there are people he/she can count on. He/she is capable of forming trusting personal relationships and displays few symptoms of stress and anxiety. He/She is able to cope with change and spontaneity.
- **Identity** – A child with a sense of identity has a strong sense of individuality, accurate self-perception, and feels comfortable with praise. He/she is able to identify and express emotions appropriately and has a positive outlook on self and others.
- **Belonging** – A child with a sense of belonging is able to make friends, cooperate, and share as well as show compassion toward others. He/She is comfortable in group settings and is accepted by peers and sought out by others.
- **Purpose** – A child with a sense of purpose takes initiative, feels responsible for his or her actions, seeks alternatives to problems, and evaluates his or her past performance. He/She is self-directed and appears to have a strong sense of purpose. He/She is able to make decisions and seeks alternative solutions to problems.
- **Competence** – A child with a sense of competence is not only aware of his or her strengths but is also able to accept his or her weaknesses. He/She seeks out challenges and does not give up easily.



Build a Sense of Competence

Help children focus on their own strengths.

- Explain that everyone does something well.
- Have them make a list of their strengths.

Analyze the situations in which children say “I can’t.”

- Do they mean, “I feel incapable?”
- Do they mean, “I won’t because I’m afraid of failure and disapproval?”
- Do they mean, “I am unwilling to do what you want me to do because I want to do something else?”

Be aware of hidden messages in some verbal communications.

- “Let me do it for you.” (You’re incompetent.)
- “I like the way you told that story.” (You’re competent.)
- “Don’t bother me.” (You’re not important.)
- “You’re in the 10th grade, you should be able to do 10th grade work.” (You’re stupid.)
- “You got only five A’s, next time bring up that B.” (Be perfect or you can never do enough to please me.)

Appreciate the progress made in correcting undesirable behavior.

- Recognize their efforts. Catch them being good.
- Acknowledge any improvements toward the overall goal.

Build self-reliance.

- Allow children to do for themselves those things they can do, even if it’s not done as well as you could do it.
- In giving praise, be sincere and specific.

Highlight successes rather than failures.

- Direct attention to the number of correct responses.
- Recognize and appreciate creativity and clarity of thought.

Plan activities so that children’s chances of experiencing success are increased.

- Instead of one big goal, have several small ones.
- Provide resources when necessary.

Create a positive environment.

- Model positive behavior.
- Praise your children so that they become comfortable with praise.

Find special time.

- Try one-on-one time with each of your children.
- Do activities together with your children.



Build a Sense of Identity

Value the uniqueness of each person.

- No two people look or think exactly alike.
- People grow and develop at different rates.

Accept children's feelings as valid for them.

- Help them understand that it is OK to have feelings, and that there are appropriate ways of expressing feelings.
- At appropriate times explore with them acceptable ways of expressing feelings.

Take children seriously.

- Build on their interests.
- Show sincere interest in what they think and do. Interest is often more effective than praise.

Show faith and confidence in young people.

- Let them know you believe they have the resources to meet all of life's challenges.
- Express your belief in them both verbally and non-verbally.

Don't use "put-downs" or other belittling expressions such as:

- Pointing out others' mistakes in such a way as to cause embarrassment.
- Asking questions to point out shortcomings.
- Using sarcasm, ridicule, name calling, etc.

Share your beliefs, values, and opinions.

- Express them as your point of view, not as the "truth."
- Encourage children to do the same.

Help children recognize their worth as a person.

- Explain their worth is independent of winning or losing in a game or contest.
- Avoid competition between siblings.

Teach your children how to feel.

- Teach your children words to express feelings.
- Tell and show them you love them.



Build a Sense of Belonging

Help children appreciate the strengths of others.

- Have them share a list of their strengths with family.
- Point out that they are not less worthy when other people do things well.
- Model appreciation by giving compliments.

Treat all people with equal respect.

- Let them know that you love (like) and accept them while rejecting inappropriate behavior.
- Empathize (not sympathize) with their feelings.

Accept the beliefs, values, and opinions of others as their point of view.

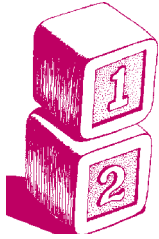
- Encourage children to do the same.
- Accepting that others have a point of view does not mean that you agree or disagree with that point of view.

Emphasize cooperation, not competition.

- Cooperative games let everyone be a winner.
- Teach team members to be supportive of each other.
- It's not whether you win or lose, it's how you play the game.

Provide games and activities that promote inclusion rather than elimination/exclusion.

- Plan activities that include all family members.
- Organize chores so that family members can work together.



Build a Sense of Purpose

Help children develop effective decision-making skills.

- Let them make decisions when appropriate.
- Provide regular opportunities for making choices.
- Encourage them to follow through on their own decisions.
- Give your reasons for your beliefs and invite them to do the same.

In problem situations, decide whose problem it is.

- If it is your problem, you solve it.
- If it is their problem, let them solve it.

Have children focus on solving the problem once it has been defined.

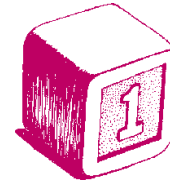
- Ask questions that will help lead to solutions.
- List acceptable solutions and let your child choose
- Let them offer their own solutions.
- Assist them in evaluating the way the problem was solved.

Teach your children to set realistic goals.

- Discuss your goals and monitor progress.
- Show your children how to weigh options and consider alternatives.
- Give your child opportunities to practice decision-making.

Create a sense of responsibility.

- Assign meaningful duties to each family member and help set a schedule.
- Don't make excuses for children if chores are not done.



Build a Sense of Security

Set and share expectations.

- Let your child know what your expectations are for him/her.
- Be aware that unrealistic demands can cause resentment, hurt, disappointment, or anger.

Give constructive feedback.

- It should be descriptive, specific, not judgmental.
- It should be immediate, not a reflection of the past.
- It should be task involved, not ego involved.

Establish logical consequences for inappropriate behavior.

- Relate the consequence to the behavior.
- Be concerned only with what is happening now instead of punishing for the past transgressions.
- Avoid the use of a critical or punitive tone of voice.

Avoid labeling children and help your children avoid labeling themselves and others.

- Label the behavior, not the person.
- Labeling is disabling.

Celebrate when errors are discovered. Trial and error is a valid way of learning.

- Everyone makes mistakes. Let your child know you have made them. Admit your own mistakes.
- Use mistakes as an opportunity to teach, rather than to blame, label, or embarrass.

Help your children feel safe.

- Discuss unfamiliar places beforehand.
- Encourage new activities. Start with simple activities. Your children will feel safer trying when they have your support.