

Ever wonder how to help your child feel great about himself?

SELF-ESTEEM:

Children need respect and honest praise

Your child's self-esteem starts developing the day she is born. You communicate to her your love with words, actions, looks, and even with your silence. Your smiles and warm hugs help her feel she is someone worth loving. Your soft, supportive words help her believe that she can face new challenges. Below are several ways to enhance communication with your child.

- **Accept your child's feelings and desires even when they are different from your own.**

Your child is a separate person from you. This means she has her own ideas, likes and dislikes, feelings and personality.

- **Treat your child with respect. Talk with your child, not down at him.** Remember to say "thank you" and "please" because he will learn how to do it from you. Take the time to explain why you want him to do something. "You need to clean up your crayons and papers on the table now because we need to eat dinner at the table."

- **Talk with your child while doing day-to-day chores or activities.** Too often busy parents mostly talk to their children when they are telling them to do something or scolding them for something done wrong. Folding laundry, driving in the car or making a meal together are great times to talk with your child. It gives your child a chance to reflect on something that happened to her today or ask a question about something on her mind.

- **Respond to serious questions or issues without scaring your child.** Don't drop everything and look overly concerned when your child asks, "Where do babies come from?" Ask him a few questions to help you understand just how much information he is really asking for. "Do you mean when they are born?" "Yes" "They come from inside the mommy." Don't give your child more information than he is asking for, or is ready to understand.

- **Be specific and honest when praising your child.** Describe what you like that your child did and why. Instead of "Good job", say "You worked very hard on that block building. I like the windows you built."

- **Ask action questions when your child is describing something that happened to her.** "What did you do when Susan saw you crying?" Give your honest reaction without making any judgements. "That must have hurt your feelings when she said you were a baby." Your child will feel comfortable talking to you knowing that you will not jump in and tell her how she should have handled the situation.