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Develop Christ-Centered Self-Esteem

Many parents and programs focus on boosting children's self-esteem, or helping them feel good about themselves. Children with high self-esteem work happily alone, are responsible, tolerate frustration, accept new challenges, and display a range of emotions. Children with low self-esteem make self-demeaning comments, feel insecure about others' opinions of themselves, blame others for personal weaknesses, are easily influenced by others, and avoid situations that produce anxiety. So high self-esteem is a positive thing.

One problem with the world's view of self-esteem, though, is that beliefs based on other people's praise may vary from day to day. Yet God's views remain constant. So for children to have a Christian self-concept, they must see themselves from God's viewpoint: as unconditionally loved and accepted. Here are ideas for rooting worth not in kids' looks or performance but in their relationship with God:

Let children know that God loves and values them. Remind kids that God loved them enough to pay the highest price for them—his Son's life. Say things such as, "You're special to God."

Celebrate each child's God-given strengths. When children display their talents, point them to the giver. Say things such as, "I thank God for giving you a beautiful voice."

Teach children to accept failure. When problems arise, don't jump in and save the day. Instead, pray together for guidance. Also, remind children that God loves them even when things don't turn out as they had hoped or planned.



Self-Esteem Insights

People's feelings about themselves develop at young ages and have serious consequences, as various studies show:

- 42% of first- through third-graders want to be thinner.
- 80% of 10-year-olds are afraid of being fat.
- Girls' self-esteem peaks around age 9 and then nosedives.
- Aggressive boys tend to have a vulnerable, fragile self-esteem.
- Children with low self-esteem are more likely to be bullied, use alcohol and drugs at young ages, and even experiment with sex earlier than their peers.

PowerSource



Ask God:

1. To assure your children of his love and care for them.
2. To help your children base their worth on God's view of them and not the world's.
3. To help your children know that their gifts and talents come from God.

Parenting Insights

Self-esteem takes a hit during early adolescence. But you can help meet preteens' unique needs.

1. **Preteens aren't at home in their bodies.** Rapid growth can cause clumsiness. Promote teamwork and acceptance, not competition. Allow down-time for bodies that tire easily.
2. **Preteens want to be treated as young adults.** Seek kids' opinions and surround them with adults who can help them navigate any rejection from peers.
3. **Preteens are socially conscious.** Ban all putdowns, and model this behavior, too.
4. **Preteens need to be loved unconditionally and forgiven frequently.** Be quick to express forgiveness and to ask for forgiveness yourself.

OpenTheBook

**"Don't think you are better than you really are. Be honest in your evaluation of yourselves, measuring yourselves by the faith God has given us."
Romans 12:3**

We have value because God made us and loves us. Through faith in him, we're his sons and daughters, honored children of the heavenly king.

Teachable Moments

1. Compliment Class—

Genuine compliments are priceless and contagious, but they can feel awkward. During daily interactions, help your children learn to comfortably give and receive compliments.

2. The Last Shall Be First—

Serving gives children an indestructible, independently rechargeable self-worth mega-boost. Create opportunities for kids to share their God-given talents with someone in need. For example, they can read aloud, sing, or play music at a nursing home.



3. Positioned for Success—

Create tasks for kids that are achievable yet challenging. If your child is shy, for example, help him or her take some brownies to a new neighbor. Then gradually encourage your children to try increasingly difficult tasks.



"So commit yourselves wholeheartedly to these words of mine. Tie them to your hands and wear them on your forehead as reminders. Teach them to your children. Talk about them when you are at home and when you are **ON THE ROAD, when you are going to bed and when you are getting up." Deuteronomy 11:18-19, NLT**

Your children's perceptions of themselves may seem to change from day to day or even hour to hour. Use these questions to start a conversation about self-concept and self-worth.

1. What are your favorite things about yourself, and what are you most proud of? Why do you think God gave you those things?
2. If you could change one thing about yourself, what would it be, and why? How would you explain that change to God?
3. What makes you valuable and special? How does God view you?
4. How can you have positive self-esteem without being stuck up?

Family Experience: You're Important to God

When we remember to place God first, our self-worth becomes empowered and eternal. Use these fun experiences from *IT: Innovative Tools for Children's Ministry (Group)* to help family members understand that they must rely on God.

- **Crowned With Glory—**Gather a Bible, garland, and Mylar streamers. At dusk, go outside and ask: "When you look at the world around you, what reminds you of God's greatness?" Read aloud Psalm 8:3-5. Ask: "Why do you think people are important to God? How has God shown you that you're important to him?"

Say: "Our value comes from God. Psalm 8:5 lets us know how much God values us." Repeat the verse together. Say: "God must think pretty highly of us to treat us this way." Make shiny crowns. Then say each person's name, followed by "...is important to God."



- **Marble Roll—**Gather marbles, water, and flour. Form pairs and give each pair a marble. Have pairs dip their marbles in water and roll them back and forth. Ask: "What was it like to roll and catch the wet marble?" Then have pairs dip their marbles in flour and try rolling them back and forth. Make sure there's enough flour to cause resistance. Ask: "What happened when you changed one thing with your marble? How does the way you feel about yourself change as you grow up?" Have an age-appropriate discussion about good and bad changes that affect self-esteem. Say: "No matter what you do that changes your self-esteem, always remember that your value comes from God."