

Encouraging Confidence

Changing Confidence

Learned negative feelings of confidence can be changed. It takes a lot of effort and time to turn negative thoughts into positive ones, but we CAN do it! We develop confidence by the attitudes and practices of the people who influence our lives, such as parents, teachers, clergy, and mentors.

Think about the messages you send each day. Do they sound similar to these: “watch out,” “be careful,” “stop crying,” “why are you so clumsy?,” “how can you be so stupid?,” “you’re so slow, just like an old lady,” “get out of the way, you’re always in my way,” “why don’t you go fly a kite?,” “you’re always making a mess,” “you can’t even do the easy things right,” “now look what you did, always giving me more work to do.”

We can appreciate others and want wonderful things for them, but if we send negative messages it can hurt their capacity to live with confidence.

Building Confidence

Building confidence in others is easy. Here are some techniques to try:

- ▶ Use positive comments such as: “I like the way you...,” “I admire how you can...,” “I respect you for...,” “That was really thoughtful of you to...,” “From the looks of things, you really worked hard on that project.” Demonstrate faith in other’s efforts.
- ▶ Focus more on contributions, assets, and strengths of others.
- ▶ Avoid the mistake of moralizing your statements. Never say: “It’s about time” or “I told you so.”
- ▶ Avoid the temptation to interfere when others are attempting a task unless life-threatening elements are involved, such as safety, skill, and wisdom.
- ▶ Recognize efforts and improvements in completing the task as well as the final accomplishment.
- ▶ Learn to separate encouragement from praise. Encouragement motivates a person in doing a task such as: “You seem to have feelings that you have not reached your goal, but look how far you’ve come.” Praise is what you give a person when the task is completed such as: “That’s great, you must feel mighty happy with what you’ve accomplished.”
- ▶ Value others for what they are; place emphasis on the positive aspect of their behavior; show faith in them so they will develop self-confidence in themselves: recognize their efforts and improvements; and show them appreciation for their contributions to family, church, community, and world.

Confidence Builders

We all need to be loved unconditionally. We need someone to let us make a mistake or a mess while creating in a safe environment. We need listening ears instead of critical overviews. We need to build, create, thank, feel, play, and enjoy. We all need to know we're doing our share. We need to know that improving is a success in itself. We need to learn that when we let those high ball pitches go by and get a walk instead of a triple we're still developing workable skills. We need to know that others are trying just as hard as we are to keep the living room clean. And we need to be appreciated for our own successes, which are not being compared with another's.

Here are some ideas for building confidence in others at all ages:

▶ **Two-to-Three-Year-Olds**

Animal Sounds - Guess the animal which makes the sound being imitated by the child. Now imitate an animal sound. (i.e. Child says "arf, arf." Adult, puzzled, says: "That can't be a cat. And it isn't a fish. Oh, I know, you are a dog!")

▶ **Four-to-Six-Year-Olds**

Night Walk - Use flashlights. Take a night walk as a family. Point out how things look and sound differently. Build confidence of the darkness.

▶ **Seven-to-Eight-Year-Olds**

Shadow Acting - Stretch a sheet across a doorway and place a light behind it. Stand between the sheet and the light, and make pictures with your arms, hands, and fingers or simple cardboard figures.

Puzzles - Select colorful postcards. Write a message for a friend or relative. Cut the card into four or five pieces. Send in an envelope. Try reassembling it before sending.

▶ **Pre-adolescents-to-Teens**

Invite Children to Dinner - Plan a formal dinner with the child's favorite menu. When dinner's ready, the children walk outside, ring the doorbell, and you welcome them as your guests.

Friendship Album - Put pictures of children's friends with names, addresses, and special things about each one in an album.

Participate in Their Activities - Get involved by being a parent leader, attending games or recitals, or helping them discover their strengths. Encourage them to try new things - foods, activities, or visiting new places. Help them to determine their likes and dislikes.

▶ **Adults**

Seeing Others' Strengths - Pay a sincere compliment, smile, listen, or do something special for at least five people

Give Thanks - Think of the many positive things for which you are thankful.

Positive Thoughts - See a problem as a challenge. Identify at least two positive things you learned as a result of your experience with this problem. Learn something new and fun (read a book, talk to an expert, experiment, or enroll in a course).