

ParentBrief



Teaching kids to have confidence in themselves

We've all been there. Lost opportunities, last minute rethinks, lack of belief in our abilities and skills...and all because we lacked the confidence to take a risk, or be assertive, or tackle something new. In social-emotional development, self-confidence is a "biggy". A healthy self-confidence means we'll give something a try, believe we can give it our best shot, and come out the other end still feeling good about ourselves, despite any setbacks along the way. So how can we teach our kids to have confidence in themselves?

A daily dose of confidence

When you look at little kids, it's amazing just how much innate confidence most of them seem to have. They're programmed with natural resilience, perseverance, and an inbuilt capacity to thrive. But as they get older and especially when they enter the education system, they learn to doubt themselves. They learn to give up. They learn that they're not 'good enough'. Unfortunately, some kids also learn that they can't measure up when it comes to parental expectations.

Confidence is built through experiencing failure and success. A child's confidence is also built through age-appropriate independence, responsibilities, choices, healthy risk taking, and encouragement to make their own decisions. Parental role modelling means we are best placed to give our kids the opportunities and experiences to teach and build their confidence. This doesn't mean that we micro-manage their risk taking, or their problem solving, or that we take responsibility

for their decisions or curb their independence in any way. Confidence is gained if we take a supervisory back seat and let our kids connect with their world.

Ways we can help build confidence in our kids

- Daily doses of love, security and encouragement. This also helps build self-esteem.
- Appropriate praise for a job well done.
- Resist rescuing. Kids need to know it's OK to fail, feel disappointment, frustration and anger.
- Role model perseverance, commitment, working through tough situations and the self-talk needed when chores or schoolwork is boring.
- Resist stepping in too early to help solve the problem. Stay tuned, listen and encourage, but also give your child time to work it out for themselves.
- Talk about optimism and resilience. Talk about how disappointment can often translate to defeat unless we think about the situation differently.
- Monitor perfectionism and the fear of failure. Talk about times in your life when you didn't get it right first go.
- Encourage kids to make their own decisions and choices to gain confidence in their judgment.
- Nurture interests and hobbies. Give kids opportunities for success and socialisation.

On a daily basis, we can dole out big doses of confidence building by believing in our kids - their abilities, quirks, qualities and strengths. Confident kids are kids who are comfortable in their own skin...and more likely to take on the world.