

The importance of high self-esteem

Low self-esteem can lead to frustration, anger, avoidance behaviour, isolation and lack of achievement.

Some advocates of high self-esteem stress the mantra 'I am capable of anything if I apply myself' but I suggest the need to strike the balance between confidence and arrogance. It's about positivity and recognition of progress NOT an emphasis on expectations.



I believe that self-esteem will be raised by positive feedback (praise and recognition); academic achievement; skill development; problem-solving abilities and critical thinking; learning from setbacks; social and communication skill development; accomplishing goals; self-discovery and pursuit of interests and a sense of purpose in life. Children need to recognise their own uniqueness.

Young Minds reported that in an average classroom 10 children will have experienced parental separation; 8 will have experienced severe physical violence, sexual abuse or neglect; 1 will have experienced the death of a parent and 7 will have been bullied.

For the teacher it is important to use some of the 10 Top Teaching Tips (e.g. making it safe in the classroom, speaking clearly), and to use PRAISE, REWARD and CELEBRATION wherever you see signs of success; being genuinely open, kind and sincere. Try to reach every child, work together with the child on learning and stimulate imaginations using the creativity of art and drama when appropriate.

Summary for parents and teachers wishing to give support:

1. Encourage and show interest
2. Build small steps to learning so that you can provide a framework of success
3. Help but don't take over
4. Explain that learning and achievement take time and that sometimes there will be failures but don't let them weaken that resilient attitude – I will get there in the end
5. Focus on the child's well-being as well as their learning