

Resource Article

Helping Children Build Confidence

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Confident children feel worthy of love. They are capable of coping with successes and failures in life. Ideally, children know they are loved unconditionally by their heavenly Father, and they love Him in return. They know that God is always with them and that He empowers them to accomplish His goals for their lives. What a great basis for confidence!

Characteristics of Confident Children and Teens

Confident children:

- Accept themselves
- Feel deserving of love
- Believe they have skills to cope with their successes and failures
- Learn from and sometimes laugh at their mistakes
- Make friends easily
- Enjoy trying new things
- Are happy and hopeful, and they smile a lot

Characteristics of Children Who Lack Confidence

Children who grow up without love often lack confidence. They may:

- Be self-critical, believing the lies they have heard or lived, such as "I am stupid" or "I am worthless"
- Be fearful of making mistakes
- Be hesitant to try new things or even incapable of trying new things
- Assume they will be rejected
- See setbacks as permanent failures
- Give up easily

Building Confidence in God

For children, confidence is largely shaped by the words and actions of the adults in their lives. Tell them over and over how God feels about them and how you feel about them. Pray aloud for them, thanking God for their potential.

Create a safe environment where they can dare to make mistakes.

Show interest in them. Get to know them well enough so you can comment on their successes and affirm them for trying new things.

Acknowledge and accept all of their feelings.

Celebrate their strengths, talents, and successes.

Praise them, and make sure that your praise is realistic. For instance, if a child hands you a poorly-written paper with many spelling mistakes, do not say, "Great writing." Instead, praise the child's efforts and perseverance in completing the task and encourage him to correct the paper.

If you hear children saying negative things about themselves, encourage them with the truth: that they are loved and valued by God. You might say, "That is just not true. You are special to God."

Encourage children to believe in their dreams.

When children need correction, criticize their behaviour, not who they are. For instance, when a child leaves a mess, do not say, "You are bad" or "You are lazy." Instead tell her, "I feel upset when you do not clean up after yourself because then I have to do more work."

Talk with children about how to deal with setbacks and mistakes.

Teach children to forgive themselves.

Encourage children to find out what their talents are, to try new things, and to be independent.

Be a positive role model. Control your emotions, and do not be harsh with or too critical of yourself.

It is never too late for children to develop more confidence. With your help, they can blossom into the confident adults God created them to be.