

# ideas for parents

Easy Ways to Build Assets for and with Your Child

## FAST FACTS

### ASSET #38: Self-Esteem

Youth are more likely to grow up healthy when they have high self-esteem.

**52%**

of youth surveyed by Search Institute have this asset in their lives.\*

### What Are Assets?

Assets are 40 values, experiences, and qualities that help kids succeed. "Self-esteem" is one of four positive-identity assets.

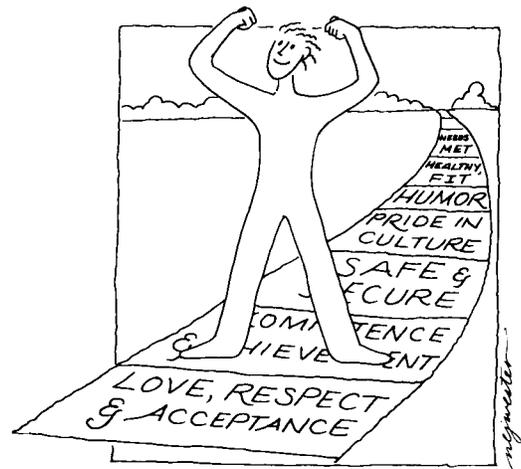
\* Based on Search Institute surveys of 217,277 6th- to 12th-grade youth throughout the United States during the 1999-2000 school year.

## High Self-Esteem: Where Does It Come From?

We all know what pulls us down when it comes to how we feel about ourselves. Guilt. Prejudice. Rejection. Neglect. Disrespect. Put-downs. Ridicule. Failure.

But what pulls us up? Author and psychologist Dr. Louise Hart, a leading educator on self-esteem development, says high self-esteem comes from

- Love, respect, and acceptance.
- Being taken seriously.
- Being listened to.
- Having your needs met and taken seriously.
- Honoring uniqueness.
- Being healthy and fit.
- Having meaning and purpose in life.
- Having a sense of humor, laughing, and playing.
- Taking pride in your cultural heritage.
- Having choices and a sense of personal power.
- Having safety and security.
- Doing good.
- Competence and achievement.



Dr. Hart suggests families talk about their strengths and focus on positive things about each other. "We make healthy children by working from the inside out," she says, "by cherishing and accepting them as they are and nurturing their growth and development."

## talk together

Questions to discuss with your child:

- Name three things you like about yourself and explain why.
- Think back to when you were younger: When did you feel really good about yourself? What was happening? When did you feel bad about yourself? Why?
- When you feel the best about yourself, what activities are you doing?



### The Difference between Boys and Girls

Who is more apt to like themselves, think they have a number of good qualities, and be glad for who they are?

Boys are. Search Institute

researchers discovered that 56% of boys have a positive self-esteem whereas only 47% of girls do. Why do you think that is?

## time together

Three ways to help your child feel better about her- or himself:

1. Compliment your child and let your child hear you saying good things about her or him to someone else.
2. On your child's birthday, give a gift that represents what you admire in her or him and state that admiration specifically.
3. Have your child create an "all about me" book. He or she can write about the family, activities of interest, favorite school subjects, proudest moments, etc. Include photographs, drawings, or special mementos.

**Quick Tip:**  
Give your child lots of attention and compliment her or him.

### More Help for Parents

**Your Child's Self-Esteem** by Dorothy Corkille Briggs. This book offers a formula for parents to help create strong feelings of self-worth in their children. (Published by Doubleday.)

### Q & A about Self-Esteem

Q: Can a parent really affect a child's self-esteem?

A: Yes, says Jean Illsley Clarke, author of *Self-Esteem: A Family Affair*. "Life's positive and life's negative offerings are the areas in which adults have great power and opportunity to impact self-esteem," she writes in her book. She suggests parents can provide positive opportunities for their children to succeed; give positive messages to their children; love their children even when they make poor choices; and give specific alternative suggestions when they want their children to act in different ways.

## FiNal WoRD

**"Giving children the feeling of being cared about for themselves, not just for their performance, is integral to their self-esteem."**

**—Richard Oberfield, M.D.**

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