

INSIGHTS

by Michael Grose - No. 1 parenting educator



10 ways to build more confidence in kids

“Confident kids are more likely to make the most of their potential as they’ll extend themselves both socially and learning-wise. Failure doesn’t reflect on them personally. Fears and anxieties, while present, don’t stop them from trying new activities.”

The power of parents to shape a child is enormous.

Self-confidence is one area that parents have significant influence, particularly for children of primary school-age and below. Kids in these years are on a journey to work out what they can do and how they can fit into their various groups. They are the confidence and esteem-building years.

As a parent, you are in THE prime position to mirror back to kids how they should see themselves. You do this through your messages, your expectations and how you treat your child.

Confidence is often confused with extraversion, assertiveness, self-assuredness and cockiness. It’s not necessarily so.

You can be quiet, introverted and full of self-doubt but still feel and act confidently in a given social or learning situation.

Confidence is more about risk-taking and trying new activities. Confident kids are more likely to make the most of their potential as they’ll extend themselves both socially and learning-wise. Fears and anxieties, while present, don’t stop them from trying new activities.

Here are 10 ways to build confidence in your kids so they can take their place in the world:

- 1. Model confident mindsets:** Kids pick up your thinking as well as your language so teach kids how to approach tricky or new situations confidently by doing so yourself. That means, don’t put yourself down if you make a mistake.
- 2. Encourage kids to look on the bright side:** Optimism is catching and helps kids overcome their fears. Help kids set their antennae to look for the good, something positive or a learning in any situation.
- 3. Help them understand self-talk:** That little voice inside their heads can talk them up or talk them down. Kids who are low on confidence use a great deal of negative self-talk. Get kids to listen to their self-talk and help them work out alternative messages that help them rather than hold them back.
- 4. Recognise effort & improvement:** Low risk-takers and perfectionists appreciate parents who focus more on the processes of what they do, rather than results. Effort, improvement and enjoyment are examples of processes that you can comment on.
- 5. Focus on strength and assets:** Fault-finding can become an obsession for some parents, particularly fathers. Step back and look at supposed faults through a different lens (i.e. stubbornness can be rebadged as determination, which is handy in many contexts). Let your kids know what their strengths are so they know what they are good at!



- 6. Accept errors as part of learning:** Don’t over react when kids don’t get the perfect score or make mistakes. Errors are part of learning, ask any golfer.
- 7. Give them real responsibility at home:** Giving responsibility is a demonstration of faith. It fosters self-belief and also provides growth opportunities for kids. Confidence and responsibility go hand in hand.
- 8. Develop self-help skills from an early age:** Confidence is linked to competence. You can praise a child until the cows come home, but unless he or she can do something they won’t feel confident. Basic self-help skills are inextricably linked to self-esteem.
- 9. Spend regular time teaching & training:** Parents are children’s first teachers. They educate them in everything from how to do up their shoelaces as pre-schoolers to how to fill out a tax form as late adolescents. Look for teachable moments where you can help your kids. They are everywhere!
- 10. Build scaffolds to success and independence:** Look for ways to make it easy for your child to be successful. That may mean that you break down complex activities into bite-sized chunks so they can experience success or even cope with stressful situations so they can overcome their fears.

There are some powerful strategies outlined here. Think about how many of these you use already and which strategies you would like to find out more about. Confidence-building is one of those foundation areas that can have an enormous impact on kids and one that we can all learn more about.

For more practical ideas to build confidence in kids visit www.parentingideas.com.au/confidence

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