

Confidence and Self-esteem

What is it?

Self-confidence is when we trust in our own abilities, qualities and judgement. People with self-confidence tend to have the courage to embrace new situations that, in time, leads to a sense of confidence. Self-esteem is how we see ourselves and our worth. Feelings around our self-esteem begin to develop in early childhood. The judgement is internal and can be difficult to change if we see ourselves in a certain way. **Self-confidence** is how you feel about your abilities and can vary from situation to situation. **Self-esteem** refers to how you feel about yourself overall; how much esteem, positive regard or self-love you have.

What can cause low self-esteem?

What affects an individual's self-esteem differs from person to person. Some people may suddenly develop low self-esteem, whilst for others it may happen slowly over a longer period of time. There are many events and experiences that could have an effect on a child or young person's self-esteem. These include: bullying; exams/school attainment; ongoing stress; peer pressure; worries about appearance or body image; changes in relationships; mental health problems; and money problems.

Signs and Symptoms

A lack of confidence and self-esteem difficulties can affect us in different ways. There are various signs and behaviours that you may pick up on that could point to your child struggling with their confidence and self-esteem.

These include:

- Having a negative image of themselves
- Being preoccupied with personal problems
- Overly fixating on their appearance
- Being sensitive to criticism – e.g. getting upset
- Putting themselves down
- Minimising accomplishments & magnifying mistakes
- Finding change difficult
- Avoiding new and unfamiliar things
- Not dealing well with failure
- Self-harm
- Physical symptoms such as headaches, difficulty sleeping and tiredness

- Slouching/avoiding eye contact
- Being hostile
- Withdrawing socially
- Negatively comparing themselves to their peers
- Finding friendships difficult - both making and keeping friendships
- Quickly backing down in conversations

Feelings

A child with low confidence and low self-esteem may feel:

- Worthless, stupid, bad and ugly
- Unlikeable and unlovable
- Awkward
- Incompetent
- Isolated and lonely
- That they aren't as good as others
- Victimised by others
- That mistakes they make are magnified
- That they don't like themselves
- Unable to make decisions or to assert themselves
- That they don't deserve to be happy

Suggestions for Parents

Many factors in a child's life including changes in the family, moving school or house, bullying and exam stress can affect their confidence and self-esteem. Support from parents and other emotionally available adults can help them to get through this.

You can help your child to feel supported and cared for by being 'emotional available' to them and/or arrange regular times for them to 'check in' with you or an adult that they feel comfortable talking to and who has the time to offer support. Regularly checking in will help your child to feel supported and it will also give you the opportunity to monitor how your child is doing and to support accordingly.

Support your child to identify strategies that might help, such as finding someone to speak to in school, journaling, exercising, listening to music and engaging in activities they enjoy.

There are some things that make a difference

- Tell them what makes them special to you. Be positive about them as a unique person and show them lots of love.
- Try to set an example of having a positive attitude when faced with challenges.

- Be sure to let your child know that you value effort rather than success or perfection. Phrases such as “Well done, that was hard, and you managed it”.
- Let them know that we all see things differently. They should not be afraid to voice their ideas and opinions.
- Allocate time each day to chat, laugh and do something together.
- If you are unhappy with their behaviour, tell them, but make it clear that you love them unconditionally.

Ideas to support and boost self-confidence

Some ideas to support and boost a child’s confidence are to help them:

- **Challenge negative self-talk.** Help to identify negative self-talk and replace with positive statements.
- **Spend time with people who love and support them.** Help them to spend time with people who lift them up, compliment and encourage them.
- **Focus on their positives.** Help to remind themselves of their strengths, achievements and the compliments they’ve received.
- **Accomplish something.** Support them to set realistic and achievable goals (it helps if it’s something they enjoy) and visualise success before they begin. If you can see it, you can believe it!
- **Discover and develop their talents.** For example, through clubs, groups and activities. Finding something that they are good at provides a huge boost to their feelings of self-worth.
- **Be kind to themselves.** We are often more supportive and kind to our friends than we are to ourselves. Encourage your child to speak to themselves in same way that they would speak to a friend in a similar situation.
- **Acknowledge their feelings.** Help them express their feelings in words. For example, encourage them to say “I’m upset because...” or “I feel happy when...”
- **Know it’s ok to say ‘no’.** People with low self-esteem often feel that they can’t say ‘no’. Normally saying ‘no’ will not upset a relationship and saying ‘yes’ all of the time can make us feel angry and resentful.
- **Accept mistakes and learn from them.** We all need to know what doesn’t work and what does work. Know that good enough is good enough, there is no such thing as perfect!

Suggestions adapted from Emotional Wellbeing Service (link below).

You can also refer to counselling or third sector agencies if you and your child feel this would be helpful. Referrals to child and adolescent health services (via GP) are typically appropriate when school interventions and support at home have been tried, but things haven’t improved and you’re concerned that your child’s low self-esteem is impacting day-to-day functioning. You can talk to your GP, and you can go without them if they would rather not come along with you. It can be helpful to write down what makes you think your child has low self-esteem.

Useful websites / Resources



<https://positivepsychology.com/self-esteem-worksheets/>

<https://www.twinkl.co.uk/resources/keystage2-ks2-pastoral-support-and-well-being/keystage2-ks2-pastoral-support-and-well-being-student-pastoral-support/keystage2-ks2-pastoral-support-and-well-being-student-pastoral-support-self-esteem>

<https://www.dove.com/uk/dove-self-esteem-project/school-workshops-on-body-image-confident-me.html>

<https://www.childline.org.uk/info-advice/your-feelings/feelings-emotions/building-confidence-self-esteem/>

<https://www.dewis.wales/confidence-cyp>

<http://www.stepiau.org/low-self-esteem>

<https://youngminds.org.uk/find-help/for-parents/parents-guide-to-support-a-z/parents-guide-to-support-self-esteem/>

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/raising-low-self-esteem/>

<https://emotionalwellbeingsservice.org.uk/>

Emotional Wellbeing Service for Cardiff and the Vale - Contact directly for the Confidence and Self-esteem booklet)

This document is available in Welsh / Mae'r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg



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