

Role Models

5 Strategies to help your child build their confidence

From our award winning education team



1. Focus on the process rather than the goal

Praise your child for their effort and perseverance rather than always focusing on the success of the outcome.

A reluctance to try new activities can often stem from anxiety around 'failing'. In fact, 2 out of 3 parents told us that their child is unlikely to try a new activity if they believe they might fail at it. When we focus on and celebrate the journey rather than the end result,

we teach children that their self-worth is not attributed to the success of the outcome. It is important to be descriptive with your praise and highlight something other than their test score, match score or finished project. Instead, highlight their effort, perseverance, teamwork, or any attribute that has contributed to their progress.

"Celebrate the journey"

For example:

Your child plays in a football match

Rather than:

"Did you win? Did you score a goal?"

Ask:

"How do you feel about the game? How did the team play together? What went well?"

"Praise your child for their effort and perserverance."

2. Encourage your child to try a new activity

(Or your whole family)

Make this an activity you anticipate they will likely struggle with initially. This may feel counter-intuitive as competence often drives confidence, but it is crucial that your child normalises the feeling of trying something new and not necessarily being good at it straight away. This forces them to experience the feeling of 'challenge' and learn to be ok with it. It is even better when they see you and other family members also initially struggle and then make progress, this will help them realise that making mistakes and finding something hard are part of the expected journey to success.



For Example –Origami

This is the perfect activity for you and your child to challenge yourselves. You can choose different levels of difficulty and demonstrate that it might not come easily at your first attempt.

Talk about how you're finding it challenging, whilst also highlighting the progress you're making (even if it's slow). You can find lots of simple origami patterns to follow on the internet.

3. Encourage your child to make decisions

If you take away all decision making and opportunity for independent thought, your child may struggle to assert themselves because they lack experience in connecting to what they think, want and feel.

Allow them to make their own choices and decisions, knowing that there will be times when you may need to set some limits.

For Example: Ask them to be involved in family decisions about what to do at the weekend, or where to go on holiday and encourage them to give their opinion, showing that it is valued and respected.

4. Encourage healthy risk taking

We are biologically pre-programmed to want to protect our children. "Be careful!", "Watch out!," "Slow down!", are just some of the cautions we regularly give. Although these are given with the best intentions, they may not be the most helpful in developing confidence and encouraging risk taking. Try and make your response more meaningful by helping your child assess the risk at play. Instead of saying the above try;

"Hold on tight so you don't slip off"

"Hold the handle of the knife so you don't hurt your fingers"

These kinds of statements can be more helpful rather than just asking them to stop. If we want to encourage risk taking and help our child feel capable,

we also need to keep our reactions in check when a risk is taken and doesn't pay off. When your child falls, tumbles or fails, keep your reaction measured so they learn that outcome is ok and will be more likely to partake in a risk again.

Example: If they fall off their bike

Instead of "Oh no! You're hurt, let's stop"

Try "whoops, you fell off... that's ok, that might happen while you learn what you're doing. What happened? Shall we try again?"

5. Teach your child to use 'I statements'

Many children struggle to assert themselves simply because they don't know how to. They don't know what language to use and how to communicate their opinion.

Focusing on themselves as opposed to others, helps them stay firmly in the assertive category. The minute we start directing our responses at others and blaming or accusing, we edge closer to the aggressive.

Teach your child to define how they think, what they feel and what they need. Some examples are;

- "I feel upset when I'm the only one not invited"
- "I have a different idea"
- "I don't like it when you say that"
- "I don't like it when you say that"
- "I need some time out"



Finally, it's important to remember that if your child is lacking confidence and struggling to try new things it is not a sign of poor parenting.

Building your child's confidence is a lifelong commitment, it doesn't happen overnight! These strategies take patience and time to embed.

However, what is important is to recognise that if your child is struggling with asserting themselves or trying new things, now is the time to take action! Investing in support for them now will provide them with a lifelong toolkit to fall back on in their future.



Book a free consultancy call with our education team, where we can unpack your quiz results and answer any questions you have on how to implement these 5 strategies

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