

Self-Respect and Confidence

Self-respect and confidence are one of the best gifts you can give your child. He will be less likely to be swayed by peer pressure. She will have the courage to stand up for what she believes is right.

Self-respect, according to the Random House Dictionary, is “proper esteem or regard for the dignity of one’s own character.” Self-respect is what our children really need to help them live by their values. It is a quality of the soul, a fundamental part of personality that develops gradually over time. Self-respect means I think too much of the dignity and character God has given me, as His child, to trample on it by degrading myself.

Christian self-respect begins with teaching our children that God is an essential part of who they are. They’re incomplete without God. Teach them that *God + Me = A Whole Person*. Post it prominently on your bulletin board or refrigerator door.

God loves each child. He made each one unique. He loves them even when they do wrong. Jesus died to save each one. God plans for them to live eternally with Him. God is the Christian’s foundation for self-respect. You cannot emphasize this too much.

Stanley Coopersmith, well known authority on the development of confidence and self-respect in children, identifies four essential components: Significance, competence, power, and virtue.

- **Significance.** A child needs to feel loved and approved by her parents and other family members. Show your affection with actions. Give sincere compliments for efforts. Respect your child’s feelings. Listen to his opinions. Recognize her accomplishments in special ways: A Cool Crown worn at the evening meal, a congratulations corner on your family bulletin board.
- **Competence.** All children need to perform well on tasks that are important to them. Coach your child to improve her skills — batting a ball, inline skating, reading a map, spelling, multiplication, how to dress attractively. Other kids respect kids who are competent. Helping develop specific skills really impacts confidence.

Other ideas that help: Provide ways for your child to recognize his own accomplishments. Help her set realistic goals for herself. Unrealistic goals tear down self-respect. Forget about perfection in everything. Try doing some things “just for fun.” Encourage her to persevere when perfection matters. Help your children develop their natural talents and abilities. Capitalize on these to build self-respect and confidence.

- **Power.** A sense of power and control over your own life is an essential building block for self-respect. Many children feel they have no control over their lives - all decisions are made for them. Children need to develop a sense of power and control, that they can make real decisions that count. Start with simple decisions and gradually move on to more difficult decisions. (More about this in the next topic.) Encourage your children to take risks, like trying out for sports or running for a class office. Encourage earning money and learning to spend it wisely. These are all power builders.
- **Virtue.** Children respect themselves more when they do what is right. A guilty conscience suffocates self-respect. Virtue and a strong sense of morality are strong builders of self-respect. This is where knowing right from wrong makes a big difference. A solid sense of self-respect cannot develop without a commitment to live morally and follow Jesus Christ’s example. When Roberto rejected his friend’s appeal to try a cigarette after school, he felt good about himself. He knew he had done the right thing. His self-respect and confidence grew.

Remember, self-respect and confidence can always be changed! Begin today to help your children build confidence and a positive self-respect.

REFLECT

I can do everything God asks me to do with the help of Christ who gives me the strength and power.

Philippians 4:13, TLB

What you are is God’s gift to you. What you make of yourself is your gift to God.

FAMILY ACTIVITIES

- **Launch Out:** Try something new, something silly, something crazy, or something daring. Have fun trying. Laugh and be a little crazy. Laugh together.
- **I Can Do That:** Help each child make a personal “I Can Do That” list by writing, drawing, or acting out. Kids tend to focus on what they can’t do. A Can Do list builds confidence.

LEARN MORE

- *10 Christian Values Every Kid Should Know: A How-to Guide for Families* by Donna Habenicht. See chapter 7 for more ideas and family activities.
- *Building Confidence in Your Child* by James Dobson.
- *Self-esteem and the Christian* by Aral Caraboolad, adventist-review.org/2005-1508/story1.html



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