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Give Your Child the Gift of Self-Esteem

By Cassie Simons

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by: **Cassie Simons**

Much has been said about the "gifted child" but in truth every child is born with unlimited potential. As expressed so well by Orison Marden:

"Deep within man dwell those slumbering powers; powers that would astonish him, that he never dreamed of possessing; forces that would revolutionize his life if aroused and put into action."

This statement can be true for your child. Not just if he's a "gifted child" but any child. Indeed, perhaps we should consider a "gifted child" to be a child whose parents have gifted him with a high self-esteem.

Children with high self-esteem are happier and more successful. Low self-esteem is common in children who are performing badly at school, have behavioural problems and suffer from depression.

The Newborn

The "helpless" newborn baby actually comes into the world well equipped with the power to get what she wants. Not only do her cries bring her parents running to tend to her; she also uses her body and facial language to get what she wants. It's no coincidence that babies learn to smile while they are still very small – it is an essential tool in their armoury of communication. A baby with a disarming smile can frequently wrap mommy or daddy round her little finger!

At this early stage, it's important to respond to all your baby attempts at communication. Attend to her when she cries (this does not preclude training her gently into a stable routine), mirror her attempts at facial communication and reward the infant sounds she makes by praising her and talking back to her.

The "Can-Do" Toddler

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Toddlers are into everything! They are learning so fast about the world around them and want to explore everything, touch everything and even try to eat many things.

It is such a crucial stage and one that is stifled by many parents. Yes, you need to control your child's behavior so that he doesn't hurt himself or damage valuable property. But you also need to give him opportunities to express this exploratory behavior without constant criticism and telling-offs.

Put valuables out of reach and supply your child with toys or household items that he can play with safely. Try to find time to get down on the floor and play with your toddler. Let him watch you and imitate you. He could play on the kitchen floor with some pots and wooden spoons while you are cooking.

Discipline

I want to emphasize up front that I believe discipline is very important, because I don't want you to think in any of what follows that I'm advocating spoiling your child. Some parents call this "allowing the child to enjoy the freedom of youth." These parents are entitled, of course, to raise their children however they wish.

But if you want your child to grow into a successful adult, you would do better by teaching her firmly what is and isn't acceptable in present day society. And, just as importantly, helping her to learn self-discipline and that you will support her in achieving anything she wants, as long as she does so ethically.

Discipline should be sensitive, thoughtful and appropriate. You should strive to never lose your temper but to discipline your child calmly and firmly. When is discipline appropriate? When your child's actions (or lack of them) may harm herself or others. When is discipline not appropriate? When it is purely for the parent's own selfish preferences.

Talk to Your Child

Positive talk with your child and generally within the household cannot be over-emphasized. Avoid criticism wherever possible; it is praise that produces good, successful behavior. Be sure to find at least one thing to praise in your child every day. Even better, give praise as often as possible.

Are you having problems finding good behaviors to praise? If so, give your child a task to do that you know he is capable of. Children love earning their parents' approval. Also remember to praise your child for trying, on those occasions that he is not successful.

Set a good example; talk about your goals and successes, and teach your child by example to accept compliments gracefully. Resist the temptation to put yourself down when you are complimented – instead, say a simple Thank You. That's an important sign of a healthy self-esteem.

The other side of the coin to talking is, of course, listening. It is very important to listen to your child. When there is something he is upset about, don't sweep it under the carpet by saying "Don't be silly!"

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Whatever it is might seem totally trivial to you but often all your child needs is for you to empathise. "I'm sorry you feel sad about that." He may then come up with a solution, or put the incident behind him without further help. Or, you can suggest a solution.

The Power of Desire

You can give your child the best possible schooling, teach all the important techniques of success, encourage goal setting and set a fantastic example. But that is not enough! All these good things have one vitally important pre-requisite. Before you can achieve anything, you must know what you really, really want.

A burning desire is the first, most important and essential step towards any major achievement. As a parent, you are in a unique position to influence another person's desires – your child's. By the time they reach their teens, you will have lost this influence to a significant degree, as young adults are swayed much more by their peers' opinions than their parents'.

So make the most of the early years by instilling positive, beneficial desires in your children. The desire to do well academically could shape your child's further education and career much more than her

innate ability.

How can you instil desire? Telling stories is a great way. Children love stories! Be creative and tell stories where the hero or heroine has a burning desire for something, overcomes challenges and set backs, and achieves the desired outcome. Try telling stories where a child achieves academic success, which in turn results in something even more desirable. For instance, one story could tell of a child who has a burning desire to travel to the North Pole. She succeeds academically and thus wins an award, which makes her dream come true. Tailor the stories to your own child's life and experiences as much as you can.

The famous author Napoleon Hill used story-telling to instil in his almost-deaf son both a burning desire to hear, and a firm belief that his disability would actually bestow upon him a great advantage (although at the time even his father had no idea what that advantage could be). By the time this boy left college, he had against the odds acquired a hearing aid that enabled him to hear clearly for the first time in his life. More remarkably, he had justified his father's belief by securing a marketing position with the hearing aid manufacturer to bring the same benefit to millions of other deafened people.

"Gifted child"? Give your child the gift of self-esteem, and you will give him the gift of happiness.

Cassie Simons is the author of "How to Help Your Child Succeed", a revolutionary approach to guilt-free parenting.

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Home Made Gifts, The Best Way To Teach Your Kids The Value Of The Holiday

By Joey Lewitin

To a large extent the holidays have come to be more about materialism than the original values of peace, harmony, and faith. Advertisers hit us from all sides with messages of greed and pettiness. Every media outlet is rife with the idea, "buy this, or they wont love you."

In such an age, it is important to remind the children about the true meaning of the season. This can be done, to some extent, by helping them to build their own gifts to give to others, and teaching them what the true value of a gift is. This has several major benefits.

1. In building the gift you will be spending time with the child doing something constructive.
2. It will teach them the value of money. The item they buy would have to be made just like the item they make themselves. Money doesn't just appear it has to be earned, and then traded. So money is trading work, for work.
3. It will engage their imaginations and creativity.
4. The gift they create will be much more meaningful, and you should let them know that.

As you can see, there are a ton of benefits to having your child build a gift themselves. At a young age this is obvious, but even as they grow older and into their teens this should be something you encourage.

Building a gift is easy. Different levels of skill can accomplish different things of course, but the mediums are fairly similar across all ages.

You can encourage the child to make you a card or a picture. You can give them clay or plaster and let them sculpt. Or you can suggest they write you a poem, or a story, or frame some nice pictures they take.

You should play to the child's interests. If you get them started on an art form for a single project, it could click and give them a hobby for years to come, while expanding their horizons. Try and get them to be creative, and stretch their limits. Most important of all, be encouraging, the child is a new artist, and so will be hesitant about their work. This is your chance to help their self esteem at the early stages of a new craft.

Joey Lewitin is an author and designer of fine gifts and furnishings, which are on display sat

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