

Confidence

True confidence, the solid belief in one's own abilities, is rooted in competence. Children gain confidence by demonstrating their competence in real situations. Confidence is not warm-and-fuzzy self-esteem that supposedly results from telling kids they're special or precious. Children who experience their own competence and know they are safe and protected develop a deep-seated security that promotes the confidence to face and cope with challenges. When parents support children in finding their own islands of competence and building on them, they prepare kids to gain enough confidence to try new ventures and trust their abilities to make sound choices.

- In thinking about your child's degree of confidence, consider the following questions:
- Do I see the best in my child so that he can see the best in himself?
- Do I clearly express that I expect the best qualities (not achievements, but personal qualities such as fairness, integrity, persistence, and kindness) in him?
- Do I help him recognize what he has done right or well?
- Do I treat him as an incapable child or as a youngster who is learning to navigate his world?
- Do I praise him often enough? Do I praise him honestly about specific achievements or do I give such diffuse praise that it doesn't seem authentic? (More information about praising effectively is in Chapter 6.)
- Do I catch him being good when he is generous, helpful, and kind or when he does something without being asked or cajoled?
- Do I encourage him to strive just a little bit farther because I believe he can succeed? Do I hold realistically high expectations?
- Do I unintentionally push him to take on more than he can realistically handle, causing him to stumble and lose confidence?
- When I need to criticize or correct him, do I focus only on what he's doing wrong or do I remind him that he is capable of doing well?
- Do I avoid instilling shame in my child?

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