

# Building Confidence for School and Life

By Diane Trautman

Confidence is an essential component of education. Children need to believe in themselves and their abilities to reach goals and develop friendships. They have to learn to trust in their ability to solve problems and make decisions. They need to know they can increase their intelligence if they work at it. And they need to learn to be resilient in the face of adversity.

Self-assuredness becomes especially important as students transition into higher subject levels in elementary school and when moving into junior high school where academic performance demands are in greater focus and the social environment is more complex.

We can help our children develop confidence in a number of ways.

Assist them to develop organizational skills by regularly setting goals and identifying the tasks necessary to meet those goals. If this is done through enjoyable activities, such as playing an instrument or constructing a kite, the process will become second nature. Recognizing their achievements, small or large, and helping them trouble-shoot problems will reinforce their burgeoning self-esteem. If a cherished goal is unattainable, help them find a new goal.

Encourage your child to participate in activities, to make friends and build their social network. Demonstrate kindness, empathy, and reliability in your relationships with others to show them how lasting friendships are created.

Teach your child that acquiring knowledge and skills requires effort. For some students, learning seems to come easily until they hit challenging material, at which point their grades falter. Students may attribute their poor performance to an inherent lack of ability and see themselves as intellectually limited, when in truth, it is their mindset and resulting lack of motivation that has undermined them.

If your child is breezing through the work, speak with his teacher about more challenging lessons or give her lessons by having her help you solve a problem. If your child is struggling with schoolwork, help him organize the work and break down the problems. Compliment him on incremental improvements.

At the end of the day, they need to know that it's okay to fail in the attempt, but not okay to give up, especially on themselves.

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