

Raising Confident Kids

Today concepts like self-esteem, confidence, and insecurity have become common parenting concerns. Considering how we train our children in these areas is important. Confidence can be defined as helping children learn to view themselves accurately and engage the world around them well. Taking this parenting posture helps us point our children toward truth and gives them opportunity to engage life in ways that allow for growth. Some observations below might seem counterintuitive and knowing your child well will greatly impact how you apply each observation. However, raising confident kids will require approaching parenting with humble confidence in the truth of the Word, under the guidance of the Spirit, and in a “*multitude of counselors (Prov. 15:22)*”. Consider the following ways to support raising confident kids.

HELP OUR CHILDREN LEARN TO FAIL

Our natural inclination is to avoid difficulty and to help those we love to do the same. This is a good desire and where we can prevent or reduce difficulty, we should consider doing so. However, difficulty is not bad or something that can or should always be avoided. James tells us that trials (difficulties) can be profitable (*James 1:2-4*). Helping our children learn to fail is one way we can encourage them to view and work through difficulties in a way that leads to growth. A key aspect to this parenting approach is helping our children view failure as an opportunity for learning and growth. With this as a starting point, we can help our children step into things they are not skilled at. When they don't succeed, which they often will not, parents can come alongside to provide encouragement, instruction, and support that promotes learning. It is easy to miss the mark here by either giving children tasks that are far beyond their current abilities or by quickly rescuing when they run into difficulty. Learning that failure is part of growth is important to growing a child's confidence.

HELP OUR CHILDREN SEE THEIR STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

Confidence is grounded in knowing and accepting the truth. You are confident in driving over a bridge because you know it has been engineered to bear the weight of a vehicle and this knowledge leads to action. *Romans 12:3* tells us we are not to think too highly of ourselves while also recognizing that God has given us gifts. Helping our children recognize and accept their strengths and weaknesses puts them in a position to embrace who they are and step into living a faithful life with the strengths and weaknesses they possess. Strengths are to be viewed as gifts from God to enjoy while showing our love for Him and others by using these gifts to bless others and do what we are gifted to do. Weaknesses can be viewed as a gift that reminds us of our need for him. Some of us fear acknowledging our children's strengths because we don't want to promote pride. On the other hand, some parents fear acknowledging our children's weaknesses because we don't want to discourage them. Being able to identify, accept, and grow through strengths and weaknesses can help our children see themselves and their Creator more clearly.

HELP OUR CHILDREN SEE THEIR VALUE APART FROM THEIR BEHAVIOR

A child who knows their value is based on something more reliable than their behavior or success is a child who is going to be more confident. It is, and should be, very exciting to see our children succeed at something they have worked hard to accomplish. These are moments we want to celebrate with our children. We want to help them see the connection between the hard work they invested and a positive outcome. Yet we want to communicate love and commitment that is deeper than their behavior. One way to do this is to focus on effort over outcomes. We want to give correction when children rebel, provide support when they struggle, and do so in a way that communicates through words or actions that we as parents continue to love and value them. In some small way we are to extend the same love and commitment the Lord shows us by being near us in our successes and failures. For many parents, it is challenging to show love toward our children when they

Raising Confident Kids

blow it. It is natural but hurtful to our children when we give the cold shoulder or express overly harsh words to show our disapproval. Helping our children see they have inherent worth and value from being created in the image of God can be demonstrated by engaging our children in a way that shows their worth is not derived from their behavior.

HELP OUR CHILDREN BY GIVING THEM RESPONSIBILITIES

Giving our children responsibilities can help communicate confidence. When we don't give children responsibilities it communicates from our actions, "I don't think you can do it." Giving our children age-appropriate responsibilities helps grow their skills and abilities which in turn helps grow their confidence. We want to allow children to be children and play is a very important part of childhood. However, giving small responsibilities here and there, while leaving room for play, can be a step into helping them grow. Certainly, they won't be able to do these tasks as well or as quickly as you will be able to. This is often one of the barriers that keep us from giving our children responsibilities. Yet, allowing them to grow in confidence by managing and growing with different tasks and roles allows them to step into levels of ownership with responsibilities.

WORD OF ENCOURAGEMENT

It is important to remember many of us feel inadequate in living out these parenting skills. Many of us would say we don't do any of these things well. One way to promote these concepts in our children is to practice them in our own lives. It is okay for you to fail and see it as an opportunity to learn. Keep getting up, seeking the Lord's help, and trying again. You have strengths and weaknesses as a parent. Celebrate and use your strengths even if they are not as strong as another's weaknesses. Don't get discouraged by your weaknesses but see them as faithful reminders of your need for the Spirit's ongoing work in your life. You have been given this responsibility of parenting and it will stretch you and require you to remember your value is not based on outcomes. May the Lord bless and encourage you as you purposefully engage in this wonderful and challenging role of being a parent.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

We bless our children when we help our children learn to celebrate the good and grow through the difficulty. Doing both of these in a thoughtful way is a worthy goal in loving and leading our children well.

1. What is something I could encourage my child to engage in even if it is challenging for them?
2. What are my child's top two strengths and top two weaknesses?
3. How can you communicate love and care toward your child independent of their behavior/success?
4. What age-appropriate responsibilities can I give my child this week?