

BUILDING YOUR CHILD'S SELF-ESTEEM

This fact sheet has been written by parent carers for parent carers.



Growing up brings additional challenges for our children, so it is really important that we help them to feel confident and build their self-esteem. Feeling comfortable with who they are, knowing that their views matter, and feeling valued by those around them can help children to grow into happy adults. This fact sheet will give you some tips on how you can build your child's self esteem, as well as giving you links to other organisations where you can find more detailed information and support.

What is self-esteem?

Having good self-esteem means feeling comfortable with who you are as a person – liking who you are and being happy with the choices you make. Good self-esteem allows us to value the positive things about ourselves while being realistic about our limitations. It helps us to feel confident, that our feelings and opinions are valued and respected by other people, and that our lives are worthwhile and fulfilling. Having good self-esteem also allows us to take problems in our stride, so that one setback does not mean that we feel like failures in other areas of our lives.

Building self-esteem

There are many ways that you can help to build your child's self-esteem. Here are some of the things that will help them to feel good about themselves:

- Celebrate successes, no matter how small and make sure your child knows how proud you are of everything they have achieved. Remember to praise effort and giving things a try, as well as success.
- Praise them every day – even something as simple as congratulating them for making a good choice will make them feel good about themselves.
- Remind your child of the fact that everyone is different and that this is OK. It can be really helpful to find positive role models for your child to relate to. Look out for news articles and photos that you can share with them.
- If things go wrong, remind your child of all the things that they do well, and reassure them that it is okay to make mistakes and that each mistake people make helps them to do better next time.
- Take time to listen to your child and value their opinions, even if they are different to your own. Allowing your child to practise voicing their opinion in the home environment will give them the confidence to speak up at school, or in meetings with professionals.
- Help your child to make their own decisions. Start when they are young, with simple choices, such as which top to wear. If they find it tricky, you can narrow down the options for them: "do you want to wear the blue one or the red one?"
- As your child gets older, encourage them to experiment with clothes and their hair – helping them to develop their own identity by trying out different looks and building their own style can also boost confidence.
- Teach your young person to be assertive with others. Give them the confidence to deal with people who ask them questions about their disability that they may not want to answer. For example, tell them that it is okay to change the subject if they do not feel comfortable.
- Encourage your child to try new clubs and activities – taking part in things that they enjoy and are good



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at really helps to build confidence and self-esteem. It's also good for practicing social skills, which again is great for self-esteem.

- Teach your child life skills – this could be anything from deciding what's for dinner to watering plants or even helping you to plan a journey. Each skill they have will boost their confidence and their independence.

Ask about

- **Advocacy services** can help disabled children and young people be heard. **Brighton and Hove's Youth Advocacy Project** (01273 295510 or www.bhyap.org.uk/your-zone/what-advocacy) is for children and young people aged 5-21 who have a social worker. **Brighton and Hove Speak Out** (01273 421921) is for young people with a learning disability over 18. **Interact** (01273 229008) provides advocacy to adults with learning disabilities.
- **Amaze information on leisure** – Amaze has a 'Fun things for all ages' fact sheet (see below) that lists lots of different local leisure activities for kids with additional needs and our handbooks and website give advice and info on making friends and joining in. Call: 01273 772289 or visit www.amazebrighton.org.uk/resources/publications/fact-sheets.
- **The Compass Card** – this is a free leisure discount card (administered by Amaze) for 0 to 25 year olds with significant additional needs who live or go to school in Brighton and Hove or West Sussex, or who are looked after by social services in these areas. Call Amaze on: 01273 772289 (Brighton and Hove) or 0300 123 9186 (West Sussex).
- **Cherish** – youth and holiday clubs and activities for young people aged 13-25 with learning disabilities in Brighton and Hove. Call: 01273 295192 or 295530.
- **Extratime** – inclusive after school and holiday clubs for children and young people (one to one support available). Call: 01273 420580 or visit: www.extratimebrighton.org.uk.
- **Befrienders or buddies** – Assert and Aspire offer support and social opportunities for young people and adults with high functioning autism and Asperger's Syndrome. Contact Assert via: www.assertbh.org.uk and Aspire via: www.bh-impetus.org/projects/aspire. Gig buddies matches adults who have a learning disability with a volunteer who has similar interests, to go to gigs and events together. Visit: www.gighbuddies.org.uk
- **The Power Group**: a lively group for young people with learning disabilities aged 16 to 25 run by Amaze and Speak Out. Meet other young people with learning disabilities and talk about what matters to you. Call Amaze's helpline (above) or email: sue@amazebrighton.org.uk.
- **Safety Net** – work with children aged 8-16 who have low self-esteem and confidence via their anti-bullying and assertiveness projects. The Safety Net Kids website: www.safetynetkids.org.uk offers lots of useful advice to kids themselves. Call: 01273 411613 or email: den.mccartney@safety-net.org.uk.

Further reading and useful links

- **Amaze fact sheets** on 'Short Breaks', 'Fun Things for all Ages' and 'Involving Young People': See: www.amazebrighton.org.uk/resources/publications/fact-sheets.
- **Contact a Family** – has many information leaflets, including one on growing up, relationships and building self-esteem. Visit: www.cafamily.org.uk or call: 0808 808 3555.
- **Family Lives** – their website has advice about building children's self-esteem (www.familylives.org.uk) or you can call their helpline on: 0808 800 2222.
- **Jessica Kingsley Publishing** – publishes many books for children and young adults dealing with disabilities, as well as *Being Me and Loving It* to help children develop good self-esteem and confidence. For more information go to: www.jkp.com.
- **Scope** – has information for young people on building confidence and self-esteem. Go to: www.scope.org.uk.
- **Young Minds** – website has lots of information about self-esteem. See: www.youngminds.org.uk/for_parents/whats_worrying_you_about_your_child/self-esteem or call the Young Minds parents' helpline on 0808 802 5544.

