

SELF-ESTEEM BOOSTERS FOR YOUTH TOOLKIT

Activities to Build Youth
Self-Esteem



BY DR. NEKESHIA HAMMOND

Spend one-on-one time With them

One-on-one time is crucial to showing your children that you want to spend time with them. It just takes a simple act of communication or doing an activity together. Scheduling quality time with them instill in them that someone wants to hang out with them and values their company.

Tell them they are important

From an early age you need to tell children they matter. In a world where they are surrounded by people telling them “they are not good enough”, it’s critical to express to them that their thoughts and opinions do matter. Focus on their strengths and remind them what they excel in.

Explain that no one is perfect

When a child is feeling down about themselves and nitpicking every little thing, it helps to remind them that no one is perfect. Not even the celebrities in the magazines. Perhaps you could show them websites that have images of celebrities before and after photoshopping just to prove your point. Everyone has flaws, but it’s how you embrace and react to those flaws that determine your character.

Get them moving with extracurricular activities

Put children in a sports activity, or some group activity that will get their blood pumping. As they move their bodies, not only will they get better at hand-eye coordination, they will feel better about themselves. The sense of community that comes with doing something physical with one’s peers, can help them to feel like they are not alone. It also helps them to get physically fit, which is a natural self-esteem booster.



Encourage them to get a job

There are few things that build up youth self-esteem quite like earning their own money. In fact, if they can create a big goal to put the money they earn over the summer towards, it will boost their self-worth that much more. Why? Working towards something, and watching it come to fruition, gives young people a sense of satisfaction that is simply priceless.

Have them do community service or volunteer work

Not only can these activities help them qualify for scholarships if they log their hours, as a child does volunteer work, they will see their community in a whole new light. They'll realize that they are part of something bigger than themselves, and that working with others can create big changes and move mountains. In all likelihood, they will also be given duties and responsibilities that empower and motivate them to work harder in their work. They can then take these skills, and all the good feelings that come along with them, into their coming years to have an edge for things like college and job applications.

Put them to work at home

From helping with the chores, to cooking in the kitchen – the more activities you can teach your child to do, the better. As they learn new things, they will gain a sense of independence, which can work wonders for youth self-esteem. As they perform their tasks, be sure to compliment them on a job well done. If they help with cooking and it doesn't turn out as good as they hoped, help them to learn from their mistakes. Let them know that sometimes recipes go bad, but that we can always try again.

Praise children and let them know you are proud of them

Even if you don't always agree with their choices, let them know that you are proud of them. Praise wins such as good grades and praise them for a job well done on projects and in sports.





Remind them to start and end each day with gratitude

Teach them gratitude rituals, like taking deep breaths in the morning and thinking of 5 things they are grateful for. Remind them to write down or draw what they are grateful for often.

Teach youth about meditation

There are hundreds if not thousands of free guided meditations on YouTube. They can reduce stress and anxiety significantly. Meditation also reduces your blood pressure and your heart rate, while boosting the immune system and increasing positive emotions.

Encourage regular exercise

Not only can exercise boost your mental health, it can actually reduce symptoms of mental illness. According to the US National Library of Medicine, National Institutes of Health, "Exercise improves mental health by reducing anxiety, depression, and negative mood and by improving self-esteem and cognitive function. Exercise has also been found to alleviate symptoms such as low self-esteem and social withdrawal."

Laugh often

Laughter can be quite therapeutic, so watch comedies, read jokes, tell jokes, and more to add more giggles to your life. Laughter is a coping method that can help build self-esteem.

Have them do their favorite hobby often

Keeping your mind active can help prevent negative thoughts, and reduce stress. Allow children to do things that they love to do. Don't force them to do sports if they love arts and crafts. Simply, don't force music lessons, if they would rather be playing sports. Encourage activities they enjoy that make them happy.

Teach them to love who they are

Practice positive self-talk with children. Remind them to treat themselves well with gentle words. Express to them they are worth it!

Give children choices, and encourage them to make their own decisions

By letting them decide, they will learn what they like, and speak up for what they want. You're teaching them that their choices matter. When a child is given the power to choose, it helps them to be more confident, and find out exactly what they want and believe in.

Model positivity

The best way to teach children positive self-esteem, is by modeling it for them. They're soaking in the knowledge and mimicking behavior. Not only should you watch the words you say to yourself, you should be careful about how you treat yourself as well. If you're constantly self-sacrificing, doing things you don't want to do on behalf of others, and never taking care of yourself – this sends a strong message to children that their needs must always come last. This can have a deep impact on them well into adulthood.



About Dr. Hammond

Dr. Nekeshia Hammond is an author, international speaker, psychologist, and an expert in children's mental health. She is the founder of Hammond Psychology & Associates, and the former President of the Florida Psychological Association.

Dr. Hammond speaks to various groups to help increase public education about mental health issues. She has been featured on ABC, NBC, CBS, FOX, as well as various magazines and radio shows throughout the globe. She is the host of Mental Health Moment with Dr. Hammond and author of the books **ADHD Explained: What Every Parent Needs to Know** and **The Practical Guide to Raising Emotionally Healthy Children**.



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