

Raising Self Esteem - Raising Achievement

What is self esteem?

- Self esteem is the evaluation you make and hold about yourself.
- Positive self esteem is crucial to maintaining mental health, achievement and general quality of life.

It is based on your belief about yourself in these areas:

- Competent
- Significant
- Likeable
- Successful

A healthy self esteem :

- Can accept criticism
- Is able to look at less likeable areas
- Is not dependent on the opinion of others
- Is not demolished by the rejection of others
- Is open to acceptance and love
- Is open to change

When parents and teachers talk about the need for good self esteem, they usually mean that children have good feelings about themselves. Children with a healthy sense of self esteem feel that the important adults in their lives accept them, care about them and go out of their way to ensure their safety and well-being. (This includes learning in a well structured and consistent environment)

Other factors affecting self esteem:

- Gender
- Ethnic and cultural groups
- Physical appearance including disability
- Stereotyping

How can we raise self esteem?

The foundations of self esteem are laid early in life when babies develop attachments with the adults who are responsible for them. When adults respond to their smiles and cries they feel loved and valued.

Children must also feel that they belong to a group and that they are valued and function in that group.

As they grow children become increasingly sensitive to the evaluations of their peers. This may affect the way they evaluate themselves.

NB. Children are unlikely to have their self esteem strengthened by excessive flattery or praise. The source of the praise must be reliable and believable.

How do we raise self esteem through learning situations?

- Respond to children's work with real appreciation rather than just praise - talk about it in a positive and constructive way - asking for more information if appropriate.
- Activities which offer a real challenge are more beneficial than those which are frivolous or just fun.
- Children must be esteemed by the adults who matter to them.
- Staff must help children to cope with defeat rather than always highlighting the importance of success.

There must be :

A stimulus to learn

A climate which encourages risk taking

Models to observe and learn from

The promise of success

The opportunity to learn from mistakes

Self belief

Feedback

An audience to share the benefits of learning

Opportunities to test out what has been learned

When children take ownership of their own learning they become engaged in what is happening around them - asking questions instead of just accepting what they see or are told.

