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What Is Self-Esteem?

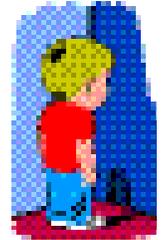
Self-esteem is how someone views themselves. Obviously you wouldn't be helping if you had your child grow up to think they were the center of the universe and that everyone should worship them. Help your child have a self-view that lets them know they have value as others have value as well.



Remember, punishment should not punish a child's identity, just his actions.



Of course it didn't. How could it? Like most of us, she naturally assumed her parents related to her the way all parents are supposed to relate to all children. So like the dutiful daughter she is, she simply passed along the self-concept bashing that had been passed to her.



The messages received from the two kinds of parental responses in the chart are astoundingly different, aren't they? In effect, the children were learning expectations related to their identities. And since children naturally, self-protectively seek to please, those who are labeled "stupid," "clumsy," and so on soon learn to live down to their parents' expectations.

Why do unwise parents magnify a child's natural childhood behaviors until they obscure the child's intrinsic given worth? As we've already mentioned, children's behavior-based identity is often rooted in their parents' need to have perfect children. So a C on a report card can equal an identity of "you're a lazy and stupid person and an embarrassment to our family."

Remember, too, that parents' nonverbal interactions with their children convey identity messages even more powerfully than words. For instance, if a father says "I love you" but regularly batters his son or molests his daughter, his behaviors muffle his words. His children do not receive the message, "I am a lovable person." They hear instead, "I am a person who gets hurt and humiliated by people who love me."

There is a world of difference between an identity label that reads Lovable and one that says "Deserves Pain" to Get Love. And as we have already observed, since children assume their parents know and tell the truth about their genuine worth, the children begin to see themselves accordingly. Therefore, the Lovable-labeled child's world of personal, spiritual, and relational expectations will bear about as much resemblance to that of the child wearing the "Deserves Pain" label as Earth does to Mars.

