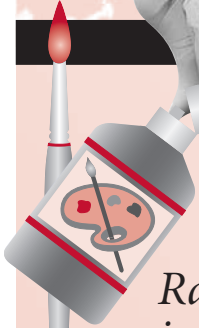


ELEMENTARY edition

A PUBLICATION FOR ELEMENTARY SCHOOL PARENTS



Live strong!

Raising children who believe in themselves

Whether tackling new learning, navigating friendships or trying to find a way to shine, children face challenges each day. Increasingly, studies show that children who feel good about themselves seem to have an easier time handling life's ups and downs. In their book *Raising Resilient Children*, psychologists Robert Brooks and Sam Goldstein write that some people are born with more resilience, the ability to roll with life's punches. Others need to work harder to develop this ability.

What makes a resilient child?

Though helping our children become resilient is our ultimate goal, how to help them develop this trait may be less than obvious. Actually, resilience is built from success with life's daily challenges such as tackling schoolwork or negotiating difficulties with friends. It can also come from trying a new sport that might seem scary or joining a club that none of their friends belong to.

As with adults, some children show more willingness to try new things than others. And children may feel more or less self-assured depending on the setting or situation (e.g., school vs. home).

Given lots of opportunities to try new things—and a safety net built from supportive family, teachers and friends—children can experience success in unfamiliar settings and with new challenges. The more success they experience, the more their self-esteem and confidence grow. And ultimately, the more resilient they become.

What parents can do to boost children's confidence...and resilience

The good news is that resilience can be nurtured. Up until age six, parents play a major role in providing unconditional love, encouraging children toward positive experiences and celebrating their successes—all key confidence-builders. In fact, most early childhood events, such as teaching children to tie their shoes or to cross the street carefully, are stepping stones toward confidence.

Once children become school age, they boost their self-esteem through the positive interactions they have with teachers and friends, as well as at home.

In general, the more developed children's self-esteem is before the teen years, the easier it

will be for them to resist such negative peer pressures as alcohol and other drug use. Confident children are also less likely to become victims of bullying and may also be the ones to stand up for those who are being treated unfairly.

There are many important ways that parents and other adults—family members, coaches, teachers, scout leaders—can boost children's self-esteem. Here are some suggestions:

- ★ **Support your children, unconditionally.** We all need a cheering section. According to Brooks and Goldstein, to nurture resilient and confident children, parents need to accept children for who they are and not for what the parents might want them to be.
- ★ **Be a positive role model.** Children learn by example. When parents are overly hard on themselves or unrealistic about their own abilities and limitations, children are more likely to adopt similar beliefs about themselves. Emphasizing what you are good at, can do and have worked hard to achieve is likely to encourage children to do the same.
- ★ **Praise your children, not only for a job well done, but also for their efforts.** For example, "I know that multiplication is difficult for you. I am proud of the hard work you are putting in to learn the times tables...and you should be, too."
- ★ **Encourage children's interests. Help them find activities they can do well, in their own way.** Activities that encourage cooperation and individual strength rather than competition—such as after-school clubs or intramurals, scouting, martial arts, dance, etc.—are especially good for building self-esteem. The public library can also be a great resource for books and free programs that help children discover new interests.
- ★ **Help your children learn to work through their difficulties.** Often our first response is to try to fix things when our children are disappointed, have trouble negotiating friendships or have fallen short of a goal. Rather than offering all the answers, talk with your children about what is bothering them and what they think can be done to solve the problem. Sometimes, role-playing can help prepare them for the actual event, particularly when children are trying to summon the courage to confront a difficult situation.
- ★ **Help them view mistakes and failure as learning experiences.** Supporting the effort they've put in and offering specific suggestions on ways they might do things differently in the future (e.g., "If you swing the bat this way, it might help you connect with the ball better next time.") can encourage children to feel hopeful and try again.
- ★ **Allow children to make some choices and decisions that are appropriate for their age and abilities.** This can give them a sense of responsibility and help them feel more confident and in control.

Children with high self-esteem tend to be upbeat and hopeful, tackle reasonable challenges, learn from their successes and failures and treat themselves and others with respect. They also seem better at making decisions, make friends more easily, may do better academically, are more willing to try new experiences and are better equipped to resist negative peer pressures and bullying.



Encouraging interest in music builds confidence

The Greater Johnstown School District encourages all students to be involved in activities that promote positive character and self-esteem development and that also teach leadership skills.

Music education plays an important role in exposing children to stimulating and meaningful experiences. "It is exciting to see students discover something new," said Instrumental Music Teacher Daniel Jones. "To see the smile on their faces when they realize that they just made a good sound on their instrument, they're thinking, 'Hey, I'm capable of doing this.'"

There are many positive reasons to include music in young children's lives. Aside from the academic benefits, singing, playing instruments and learning to appreciate music can enhance children's confidence levels, as

well. Examples of this are as follows:

- ▶ **Socially** – When children sing, dance and make music with you and others, they are learning how to be part of a group, to learn from others, to take turns and to make friends in creative ways.
- ▶ **Emotionally** – When children listen to a wide range of music styles, they learn about the many different ways they can feel. (For example, "This music makes me feel sad," or "When I listen to this, I get silly!")
- ▶ **Boosting self-esteem/encouraging risk-taking** – When you respond to your children's music-making with smiles and positive words ("I really like that song, let's sing it again!"), they're encouraged to take more chances with music. Music-making also allows them to

make choices and learn about their likes and dislikes (e.g., "I like the sound this drum makes when I hit it, but I really like playing the piano").

"Everything we do in the music classroom is positive reinforcement," said Patricia Zullo, Department Coordinator and Vocal Music Teacher. "We want students to be successful."

Some students might need to have a little more encouragement than others when it comes to involvement.

"It's okay to help steer children in the right direction," said Jones. "The activity might be something they may not have chosen on their own, but they enjoy doing."

Sometimes the time commitment can be overwhelming as students get involved in more activities after school and on the weekends. Parents are welcome to become a part of their child's activities by

becoming involved in some of the same activities, such as the booster club and parent groups.

"Being involved makes students overall better performers in life," said Zullo.



mark your Calendar

for the following 2006 dates:

January	
10-13	Grades 3-5 ELA Testing
17-20	Grade 6 ELA Testing
23	Elementary Report Cards Issued
March	
7-10	Grades 3-5 Math Testing
April	
3	Elementary Report Cards Issued
6	Elementary Parent Conferences, 4-6 p.m.
May	
1-12	PALS Testing
2-4	Grade 4 Science Testing
15	Grade 6 Orientation to Knox Junior High School
June	
23	Elementary Report Cards Issued

Citizenship through Athletics

To further develop and instill citizenship attributes, the district has developed the Citizenship through Athletics Program with the assistance of the NYS Public High School Athletic Association.

"The program provides a framework to develop good sportsmanship and a positive atmosphere for sporting events," said Michael Satterlee, Coordinator of Health, Recreation and Extra-Curricular Activities.

The program is based around POISE (Positive Outcomes in Sports Experience), which educates students, parents, coaches and athletes on appropriate behavior on and off of the playing field. The program focuses on how to act when winning or losing and how to act toward opponents.

There are four staff members trained to be instructors for Citizenship through Athletics within the district. This year, signs are to be displayed at all outdoor athletic vendors. The signs read, "Welcome to Johnstown, where sportsmanship is an expectation: Let the coaches coach, the players play and the officials officiate, enjoy the game."

The Citizenship through Athletics program sponsored a poster slogan contest in the elementary schools where students developed positive slogans. Before the contest started, elementary physical education teachers talked to students about the meaning of sportsmanship. Over 100 entries were judged, and the winning slogan will be put on special t-shirts promoting positive behaviors, according to Satterlee.

The program is promoted on a daily basis inside the school walls.

"Every day there are "POISE" teaching moments that often time can be applied when students get upset," said Robert Kraemer, Physical Education Teacher at Jansen Avenue Elementary School. "This is when you stop the game and talk about what just happened and how the students could have acted more positively."

Building confidence through reading ...parents as partners

Success with learning and school is an important way children can build self-confidence. With more confidence, children are likely to tackle new and more challenging learning tasks with greater ease. Helping children learn to read well is one of the primary goals of elementary education. You can help encourage reading at home by sharing books with your children—even after they're reading on their own. The following is a list of picture and chapter books for you and your children to share.

Picture books:

Willie's Not the Hugging Kind by Joyce Durham Barrett
The Trouble with Trolls by Jan Brett
Miss Rumphius by Barbara Cooney
Tam Lin by Susan Cooper
The Real, True Dulcie Campbell by Cynthia DeFelice
Legend of Bluebonnet and Oliver Button is a Sissy by Tomie dePaola
Stand Tall Molly Lou Melon by Patty Lowell
The Seven Chinese Brothers by Margaret Mahy
The Paper Bag Princess by Robert Munsch

Chapter books:

The Cam Jansen mystery series by David Adler
Beezus and Ramona (and other books in this series) by Beverly Cleary
Ella Enchanted by Gail Carson Levine
Not One Damsel in Distress: World Folktales for Strong Girls and Mightier Than the Sword: World Folktales for Strong Boys by Jane Yolen
The Harry Potter series by J.K. Rowling
Island of the Blue Dolphin by Scott O'Dell
The City of Ember by Jeanne Duprau