

The Origins Of Self Esteem

We've all heard it before. The child in the grocery store getting praised for every move or gesture she makes and every word she speaks. I sometimes visualize the child looking up at the parent and saying, "All right, enough already." Have we gone overboard with praise and rewards in order to raise children who have great self esteem? An Australian study says yes. (The Journal of Clinical and Social Psychology, 2005) In the past twenty years we have raised children who are "less prepared for hardship" and expect that they will be rewarded in the workplace with promotions and raises for every small effort. The opinions among psychologists seem to be unanimous that this generation of young adults seems more entitled than any before and unfortunately don't have any higher levels of self esteem. In fact, the reverse may be true. So where did we go wrong?

We failed to recognize that a large part of self esteem comes from overcoming obstacles successfully. In order to allow our children to overcome an obstacle we have to take the risk that sometimes they will fail. They will go up to the plate, try their best and it won't work out. In the eighties we were taught that the experience of failure was damaging, but perhaps it's just another part of childhood we need to experience with the support of a loving adult.

According to the research, there are five feelings associated with self esteem.

- a sense of security
- a sense of identity
- a sense of belonging
- a sense of purpose
- a sense of competence.



Certainly children can develop a sense of security and belonging by being told they are loved and accepted, and the people around them enjoy what they do and say. The other developments can only come from a child's personal experience with the world.

A sense of competence or "I can do it." comes only from performing successfully repeatedly. A toddler will try to walk many times before successfully balancing. It would not matter to that toddler if every time he fell you told him he was doing a great job. His happiness will come from actually getting up and walking. He will succeed and then move on to the next challenge, which he may try several times before he experiences success again. Past success will cause him to persevere. His ability to feel he is competent will drive him to con-

stantly try new tasks. That can continue into adulthood, if we encourage our children to try new things, even though they may sometimes fail.

It's the balance that's important. If we constantly put our children in a position that's so far beyond their grasp they are bound to fail, they will naturally become more wary of trying new things. Let them choose the things that interest them and they are more likely to succeed. If they don't, we need to be there to tell them the truth. Not everyone is good at everything right away. If they love what they're doing they should keep trying. If they keep trying without success, they will know when it's time to move on and if the activity was not really all that thrilling to them to begin with they will move on quickly.

A young adult's sense of *identity* and sense of *purpose* can only come from experiencing these series of successes and failures. You can't possibly know what talents and strengths you have, if you've been protected from failing. You also can't be sure of your strengths, if everyone is telling you how wonderful you're doing, even when it's not true. Knowing what you're good at and knowing what makes you uncomfortable are a large part of how you define yourself. Those characteristics help a young adult identify themselves as an individual. When a young adult understand their true strength they can go out in the world and discover how these strengths can be used fulfill their purpose.

How can we adjust our behavior so our children can experience challenges that make them more confident and resilient?

- Continue to tell your child how much you love him and show him how much you enjoy his presence.
- If your child looks interested in doing something but doesn't have the skills, encourage him to try, even though it may be somewhat frustrating. Help him learn to deal with the frustration so he can continue toward his goal.
- Rather than telling your child he's performing wonderfully, ask him if he's enjoying himself. If the answer is yes, encourage him to

Learning About Colors

We've come a long way from teaching children about colors by having them match words to colored splotches on white paper. Color needs to be experienced. And what better month than January when the outdoors is covered in white. You can have your child experience color by developing a color theme for the week and doing things that illustrate the color in all its variations. Use the activities on the following pages as a guide to design some winter fun and games for your child.

1. Make up a chart in your child's room that has the color of the day on it. The night before pick out clothing that matches your chosen color.
2. When you go grocery shopping, pick juice, fruits and vegetables that match the color of the day.
3. Bake cookies, cakes or breads and use coloring to match the color of the day.
4. Make beautiful drawings by only using the color of the day.
5. Play I Spy (instructions on page 5) using colors as descriptive words.
6. If your child is in a position to see out the car window, find cars and trucks that match the color of the day.
7. Play a modified version of Twister
8. Talk, talk, talk about colors.

continue whether he's rewarded externally or not. It's not always about being the best.

- If your child wants to be the best, support him through the hardship. Nobody reaches any goal without some discomfort. Understand that he's learning skills that will help him become a stronger and more resilient adult.

Fingerplays and Poems: Color My World

Color Rhyme

If your clothes are red, put your finger on your head.
If your clothes are blue, put your finger on your shoe.
If your clothes have green, wave your hand so that you're seen.
If your clothes have yellow, smile like a happy fellow.
If your clothes have brown, turn your smile into a frown.
If your clothes have black, put your hands behind your back.
If your clothes have white, stamp your feet with all your might.

by Jean Warren



Sing a Rainbow

This is one of my favorite color songs. You can find the music at www.niehs.nih.gov/kids/lyrics/singarainbow.htm. There are also additional lyrics at the site.

Red and yellow
and blue and green,
Purple and orange and pink.
I can sing a rainbow,
Sing a rainbow,
Sing a rainbow too!

Listen to your heart,
Listen to your heart,
And sing everything you feel.
I can sing a rainbow,
Sing a rainbow too.

by Delta Goodrem.



Oranges

Orange is the color of so many things I see
Would you like to sing a little song with me?
Orange juice and orange cheese,
Orange carrots, if you please.
Orange pumpkins, orange leaves,
Let' sing a song of orange.

Author Unknown

When I put YELLOW
Paint on RED,
The colors change
To ORANGE instead.

And mixing BLUE
And RED, I get
A pretty shade
of VIOLET.

Another trick
That I have seen:
YELLOW and BLUE
Turn into GREEN.

There's magic when
My colors mix.
It's fun to watch them
Doing tricks.

by Ilo Orleans



Experience Color

I SPY

I Spy is one of those wonderfully simple games that can be played anywhere, even in the car. One player simply chooses an object nearby. He then picks the predominant color of the object and says, I spy something ..[chosen color]. The other players try to guess the object. The player that guesses correctly gets a turn to describe an object to be discovered by the other players.

Twister

Toddlers can play twister. You just need to simplify the rules. Take the right and left issue out of the picture and just have them touch the colored circles with their hands or feet. You can even simplify it further by having them run back and forth jumping on the colored circles. In either case, they'll have a good time. This game can also be played by one toddler.

Monochromatic Lunch Plate

It's a healthy idea to plan to have a variety of colors on your lunch plate. But just for fun you can plan one color. Use the ideas below or bring your child to the grocery store to help plan the menu.

Orange	Green	Red	Yellow	Brown
Macaroni and cheese	Spinach gnocchi	Macaroni with tomato sauce	Scrambled eggs	Chicken nuggets
Carrots	Cream spinach	Fresh red pepper slices	Corn	Baby baked potatoes
Orange juice	Milk and avocado shake*	Natural fruit punch	Apple juice	Ovaltine and milk
Cantaloupe	Green grapes	Watermelon	Banana pudding with banana slices	Chocolate pudding

It's Time to Paint

It's time to break out the paint. Paint is the best way for your child to discover how colors work together and how they can be blended to make other colors. One way to have your child experience color mixing is by helping you mix the paint. Buy Tempera Paint in red, yellow and blue. Use these three colors to make your own custom colors and then let your child create. Make sure you prepare the environment so nothing gets damaged from the mess. Then you can relax and enjoy the experience.



*Milk and Avocado Shake

1 cup cold milk
 1/2 fresh avocado
 1 - 2 teaspoons sugar
 1 dash cinnamon

Mix all ingredients together in a blender. Adjust ingredients to get your desired flavor and thickness.

All About Your Town

Curl Up With a Chapter Book

What could be more cozy than a couch, a warm blanket and a great story. Even preschoolers can enjoy chapter books read aloud. The following are some classic favorites and a few newer selections that are appropriate for all ages.

The Trumpet of the Swan by E.B. White - This is the story of Louis, a swan who has no voice. He overcomes his handicap when his father gives him a brass trumpet. His new voice may help him win his true love.

White Fang by Jack London - The story of White Fang is timeless. Part wolf and part dog, White Fang learns to survive the wilderness and being mistreated before he forms a loving and respectful relationship with a human.

The Last of the Really Great Whangdoodles

by Julie Andrews Edwards - The Whangdoodles are perfect and peaceful creatures who live a perfect and peaceful life. Can three children help an eccentric professor locate the last of this civilization?

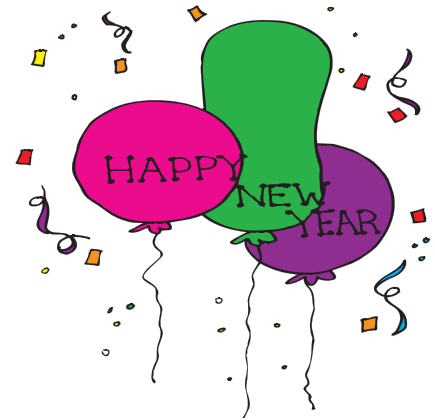
Dealing with Dragons by Patricia Wrede - Cimorene is a bit bored with the life of a princess and instead decides to serve Kazul, a great female dragon. There are adventures to be had and great lessons to learn. Part of *The Enchanted Forest Chronicles*.

A Child's Garden of Verses by Robert Louis Stevens - A classic collection of poetry that will delight children right up through middle school.

A Family of Poems - collected by Caroline Kennedy - A collection of poetry that will make you laugh, cry and remember the tenderness of childhood.

Poems to Read to the Very Young

collected by Eloise Wilkin - A board book filled with poetry toddlers can enjoy.



Mom's New Year Resolutions

1. I will resist the urge to explain to strangers why my son is wearing winter boots, a bathing suit bottom and a pajama top. I will be grateful he can dress himself.
2. When my kids are older (at least 50), I will explain why they never had any chocolate candy left after we checked their Halloween bags.
3. When I forget to go to the grocery store, I will not boil the macaroni necklaces my children made for me in preschool.
4. I will develop an ability to have a conversation with an adult that doesn't revolve around labor pains or children's toilet habits. I will feel comfortable in the silence that ensues when neither of us can think of any other topic to discuss or remember we can always discuss the weather.

from www.basicjokes.com

Colorful Words

I've only recommended one color identification book. The others expose children to color in a more subtle and meaningful way.

Uno's Garden by Graeme Base

There's always something just a little bit different and surprising about Graeme Base's work. In 2006 he introduces us to some fantastic new animals. Lumpybums, Snortlepigs and Puddlebutts all inhabit his fantastic forest. Uno, a short human-like character, discovers this forest and soon others follow. What starts as a small fishing village, grows into a town and then a city, but all at the expense of the forest. Why use this book in a theme about color? Because the enchanting colored illustrations are beyond compare. Because as you turn the pages you'll notice that each detailed illustration has a subtle difference in tone. Because Graehme Base is one of the most gifted illustrators of our time and children should be exposed to great color in great art work. This is also a counting book, a seek and find book and the text contains great phonic sounds and alliteration. On top of that it's a great story about how we need to protect the things we love and how using our imaginations can be great fun. You couldn't possibly have packed more into one book. As with all his books, the story resolves itself with a happy ending. (ages 1 - 100)

The Feel Good Book by Todd Parr

There are some things in life that just "feel good." Getting a hug, sharing treats and playing under the sprinkler are just a few. There are no subtleties to the colors in these illustrations. Objects are outlined in thick black lines and the depth of the color screams off the pages. Yellow is "YELLOW" with no shading. People can be purple, red or blue with green or pink hair. The child-like drawings will inspire young children to experiment with color in their own artwork. (ages 1 - 5)

Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See? by Eric Carle

"Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What do you see? I see a red bird looking at me."
"Red Bird, Red Bird, What do you see? I see a yellow duck looking at me."
The text continues as each animal spies a colorful friend whose illustrated on the following page. All the animals stand against a bright white background, except the white dog. Children will have this text memorized quickly and can be proud when they guess what's coming up next. (ages 1 - 6)

Touch and Feel Animal Colors: A DK Board Book

Toddlers can see the vibrant colors on these pages and can touch the animals' feathers and fur. Each page has the color label and photographs of animals illustrating the color. The photographs are beautifully detailed and set against a white background. A perfect book for the diaper bag or the car. (ages 6 months - 3)

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