

# BUILDING SELF-ESTEEM

This fact sheet has been written by parent carers for parent carers.



Growing up brings additional challenges for our children, so it is really important that we help them to feel confident and build their self-esteem. Feeling comfortable with who they are, knowing that their views matter, and feeling valued by those around them can help children to grow into happy adults. This fact sheet will give you some tips on how you can build your child's self esteem, as well as giving you links to other organisations where you can find more detailed information and support.

## What is self-esteem?

Having good self-esteem means feeling comfortable with who you are as a person – liking who you are and being happy with the choices you make. Good self-esteem allows us to value the positive things about ourselves while being realistic about our limitations. It helps us to feel confident, that our feelings and opinions are valued and respected by other people, and that our lives are worthwhile and fulfilling. Having good self-esteem also allows us to take problems in our stride, so that one setback does not mean that we feel like failures in other areas of our lives.

## Building self-esteem

There are many ways that you can help to build your child's self-esteem. Here are some of the things that will help them to feel good about themselves:

- Celebrate successes, no matter how small and make sure your child knows how proud you are of everything they have achieved. Remember to praise their efforts, even if things aren't successful.
- Praise them every day – even something as simple as congratulating them for making a good choice will make them feel good about themselves.
- Remind your child of the fact that everyone is different and that this is OK. It can be really helpful to find positive role models for your child to relate to. Look out for news articles and photos that you can share with them.
- If things go wrong, remind your child of all the things that they do well, and reassure them that it is okay to make mistakes and that each mistake people make helps them to do better next time.
- Take time to listen to your child and value their opinions, even if they are different to your own. Allowing your child to practise voicing their opinion in the home environment will give them the confidence to speak up at school, or in meetings with professionals.
- Help your child to make their own decisions. Start when they are young, with simple choices, such as which top to wear. If they find it tricky, you can narrow down the options for them: "do you want to wear the blue one or the red one?"
- As your child gets older, encourage them to experiment with clothes and their hair – helping them to develop their own identity by trying out different looks and building their own style can also boost confidence.
- Teach your young person to be assertive with others. Give them the confidence to deal with people who ask them questions about their disability that they may not want to answer. For example, tell them that it is okay to change the subject if they do not feel comfortable.
- Encourage your child to try new clubs and activities – taking part in things that they enjoy and are good at really helps to build confidence and self-esteem. It's also good for practicing social skills, which again is great for self-esteem.
- Teach your child life skills – this could be anything from deciding what's for dinner to watering plants or even helping you to plan a journey. Each skill they have will boost their confidence and their independence.





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### Ask About

- **Reaching Families** – provides training, information & other fact sheets related to this topic. We also offer benefits advice, peer support, a Facebook group & handbook (see below) for parent carers of children & young people with SEND in West Sussex. See: [www.reachingfamilies.org.uk](http://www.reachingfamilies.org.uk).
- **Short Breaks for Disabled Children** – fun, leisure and social activities for disabled children and young people outside school. Email: [SENDCommissioningTeam@westsussex.gov.uk](mailto:SENDCommissioningTeam@westsussex.gov.uk), or visit: <https://westsussex.local-offer.org/services/82-1-short-breaks>. Tel: **0330 222 2562**.
- **Single Point of Access (SPoA) West Sussex** - a dedicated route to access specialist emotional wellbeing and mental health support for those aged 4-17. Anyone can refer to SPoA including children & parent carers. Referrals will be directed to the most appropriate help from Youth Emotional Support, YMCA Dialogue or Sussex Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS). Alternatively, signposting to other sources of support may be given. To make a referral, use the online form at: <https://e-wellbeing.co.uk/support>, or Tel: **0300 304 0462**.
- **West Sussex Children's Services** – support from health and social care. If your child is under 18, call the Integrated Front Door (IFD) for West Sussex Children's Services, Tel: **01403 229900** or email: [WSChildrenservices@westsussex.gov.uk](mailto:WSChildrenservices@westsussex.gov.uk). For social care for over 18s call the Adults' CarePoint: **01243 642121**, or email: [socialcare@westsussex.gov.uk](mailto:socialcare@westsussex.gov.uk).
- **Young Minds** – has a parent guide on self-esteem (with a link to a guide for young people too) at: [www.youngminds.org.uk/parent/parents-a-z-mental-health-guide/self-esteem](http://www.youngminds.org.uk/parent/parents-a-z-mental-health-guide/self-esteem).

### Further reading and useful links

- **Making Sense of it All: From Birth to Adulthood** – Reaching Families' handbook for parent carers of children and young people with SEND in West Sussex. This provides essential information on money matters, including claiming DLA and PIP, as well as social care, health, leisure, travel, education and employment. Go to: [www.reachingfamilies.org.uk/guides.html](http://www.reachingfamilies.org.uk/guides.html).
- **Contact** – supports families with disabled children. Go to <https://contact.org.uk> or tel: **0808 808 3555**. See their information leaflets covering topics like growing up & self-esteem.
- **Family Lives** - general advice on raising families, including building children's self-esteem. Go to: [www.familylives.org.uk](http://www.familylives.org.uk) or call their helpline: **0808 800 2222**.
- **Scope** – has information for young people to help with building confidence and self-esteem. Go to: [www.scope.org.uk](http://www.scope.org.uk), call their helpline on: **0808 800 3333** or email: [helpline@scope.org.uk](mailto:helpline@scope.org.uk).
- **West Sussex Libraries** – For books on this topic available to borrow for free, go to <https://arena.westsussex.gov.uk/welcome> and search the library catalogue for 'self-esteem'. (See especially titles from Jessica Kingsley Publishing which cover a range of topics around growing up with a disability. For more information go to: <https://uk.jkp.com>).
- **West Sussex Local Offer** – go to: <https://westsussex.local-offer.org> for local services, support and details of *Short Breaks* providers for children & young people aged 0 - 25 years with SEND.

