

# 4 Small Ways to Build Confidence in Kids

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From play to chores, encourage effort and help kids acquire skills

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Self-confidence originates from a perception of competence — or, to put it more simply, children develop confidence not because family and friends praise them, but because of their own accomplishments. As a preschool teacher, I watched many children become more confident and self-assured as they learned and completed new tasks and goals.

It's only natural that as parents you want to instill confidence in your kids. Confident children believe in themselves and are able to face new challenges without fear—essential factors for a happy and fulfilling life.

## **Make time for play**

Playtime is one of the best investments you can make in your child. The hours you spend playing with your children show them that they are valuable and worth your time.

Focus your attention on your child during play. Children are perceptive and will know if your mind is elsewhere. Dedicate yourself to the game that you and your child are playing. That shared imagination brings you closer together and lets your child know that you're listening to them.

The life of a preschool teacher is a hectic one, and I often spent time multitasking. However, when it came to playtime, I gave the kids my full attention and jumped into their play with both feet. The bonds I shared with my students were often built during this important time together.

## **Provide them with small jobs**

Children need opportunities to display their skills and feel that their contribution is valued. At home, this means asking them to help with household chores such as:

- Setting the table
- Tidying up toys
- Dusting
- Sweeping
- Vacuuming
- Doing the dishes
- Sorting or folding laundry
- Washing the car

- Gardening

Consider your child's interests and give them a job that lets them feel useful and successful. If your child is proud of their ability to organize, ask them to put toys away in designated areas. When a child accomplishes a task, they feel confident.

When tasks start to lose their fun appeal, work with your children. It helps them to learn that sometimes, work comes before play.

### **Give them your attention**

I can't stress enough how important it is to make time to give your child your full attention. Much like playtime, it boosts your child's feelings of self-worth by sending the message that you think they're important and valuable.

Here are a few simple tips for building confidence while giving your kids your attention:

- Make eye contact so it's clear that you're really listening to what they're saying.
- If your child needs to talk, stop and listen to what they have to say. They need to know that their thoughts, feelings, and opinions matter.
- Help them get comfortable with their emotions by accepting them without judgment. By doing so, you validate those feelings and show that you value what they have to say.
- Share your own feelings to help them gain confidence in expressing their own.

### **Provide encouragement often**

Think about the last time someone acknowledged your hard work and told you they believed in you. That kind of encouragement not only gives adults the kind of confidence boost they need to keep going, but it also builds the best kind of confidence a child can have.

There's a big difference between encouragement and praise. One rewards the person while the other rewards the task. Praise can make a child feel that that they're only worthwhile if they do something flawlessly. Encouragement, on the other hand, acknowledges the effort.

For example, "This sand castle is amazing!" vs. "You worked so hard on this sand castle! Great job."

Too much praise can create pressure to perform and set up a constant need for approval from others. It's better instead to give your child the message that the effort—and seeing something through to the end—is what's truly important.

By setting your children up to succeed, providing them a generous amount of encouragement, and spending quality time together, you can help them grow up feeling good about themselves and the world around them.

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