

Identity Formation: What Every Child Needs (Part 2)

5. Self-Esteem

Ultimately, our self-esteem should be rooted in God and how He sees us, but our loved ones play a crucial role in helping us to see ourselves how God sees us. This message applies to you in the home and also at work or church where you might be mentoring others. Anyone who is a leader plays a significant role in enhancing others' self-esteem. People become how they are seen by authority figures whom they respect and admire after five years.

Self-esteem is a sense of worth and dignity, the feeling that you are significant. "I matter". There are behaviours that enhance the self-esteem of others and behaviours that erode it in others. Listen to your children, stop finishing off their sentences and brushing them off. Be fully present in the conversations you are having and teach your children to learn to do the same. When you do this, it will impact their self-esteem positively. When one of my children interrupts the other, I make a point of telling the interrupter that his brother was not finished making his point. By doing so, I hope to show my children that they are all important in our house. A few years ago I counselled a young girl who was extremely shy. After a few sessions I realised that it was actually the mother's behaviour causing the shyness. When asked a question, her mother constantly interrupted as if the little girl's answer wasn't good enough. Eventually the child became lazy and allowed her mom to continue to violate those boundaries by responding for her. Esteem is very important.

How is your behaviour affecting the esteem of your children? How did your parents' behaviour affect your self-esteem?

Self-esteem is the disposition to experience oneself as competent to cope with the basic challenges of life and as worthy of happiness. - Nathaniel Branden

Respect for or a favourable opinion of oneself. - Collins Dictionary

Often your children will internalise how you view them; this can work negatively or positively.

The Six Dimensions of Self-esteem

For each dimension of self-esteem, I will define it, showing you how God manifests this in how He relates to us. I will also illustrate at a behavioural level some ways of building it into others, and then give you a practical assignment to complete.

1. Self-efficacy

A sense of confidence in one's own competence. Self-validation. Confidence in the face of life's challenges. "I've got this". "I will handle it"

God in Action

John 14:12

Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father.

1 Cor 2:3-5

³ *I came to you in weakness with great fear and trembling.* ⁴ *My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power,* ⁵ *so that your faith might not rest on human wisdom, but on God's power.*

2 Cor 12:9

But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me.

Esteem Builders

- When you remind me of my calling and unique design
- When you verbally acknowledge my capability and achievements
- When you ask my opinion on difficult matters
- When you ask me to do things that are too difficult for you
- When you demonstrate that you trust my ability and judgment calls
- When you don't micromanage me
- When you don't hover after having made a request
- When you ask me once and trust that I can and will do it
- When you don't have a plan B after asking me to do something
- When you wait for me to ask for your help instead of taking over
- When you are gracious and non-critical
- When you make suggestions and not bark commands
- When you trust me with something that you usually like to control
- When you appreciate my hard work

Self-efficacy / Self-Confidence Project:

- Make a list of their abilities, and good deeds done to date.
- Communicate creatively how you have benefited from these.
- Purchase a gift to specifically appreciate them for their contribution.
- Ask for their input and listen without controlling the conversation.
- Ask them to do something for you that you usually like to be in control of.

2 Self-respect

This is the assurance of my value; an affirmative attitude toward my right to live and be happy. Comfort in appropriately asserting my thoughts, wants and needs; the feeling that joy and fulfilment are my natural birth right.

God in Action

Ps 17:8

Keep me as the apple of your eye; hide me in the shadow of your wings

Apple = pupil, middle

Heb 13:6

So we say with confidence, "The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can mere mortals do to me?"

Dan 10:11

He said, "Daniel, you who are highly esteemed, consider carefully the words I am about to speak to you, and stand up, for I have now been sent to you." And when he said this to me, I stood up trembling.

1 Cor 6:19-20

¹⁹ *Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own;* ²⁰ *you were bought at a price. Therefore honour God with your bodies.*

Esteem Builders

- When you tell me what's coming up on your schedule if it impacts me.
- When you let me know about important things in your life.
- When you communicate when running late
- When you respond timeously to my whatsapps, emails or missed calls.
- When you don't take me for granted by procrastinating.

Self-respect Project:

- List the things you do that sometimes make your spouse or children feel disrespected
- List the things your children or those you mentor do that demonstrate lack of self respect
- How has their esteem been wounded in the past resulting in lack of self respect?
- What can you do or say to them to minister healing? Go ahead and do these things.

3 Self-worth

I am comfortable with who I am despite my frailties and anecdotal behaviour.

I know I am worth a lot because of who I am, before I have performed.

My great performance is not the source of my worth but rather stems from my sense of worth.

There is no greater barrier to romantic happiness than the fear that I am undeserving of love and that my destiny is to be hurt. - Nathaniel Branden

God in Action

Ps 139:13-14

¹³ *For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. ¹⁴ I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well.*

1 John 4:17

This is how love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgement: In this world we are like Jesus

Esteem Builders

Release your spouse from the prison of performance with a golden key labelled "Freedom to Fail." – Dennis & Barbara Rainey

- When you give me continual affirmation
- When you are consistent in affection even after I have failed
- When you speak to me in a manner that does not shame or condescend
- When you demonstrate empathy and compassion
- When you purchase something small and frivolous for me that I wouldn't buy myself

Self-worth Project:

Write a paragraph or letter of positive words to your child, mentee or spouse. Be specific. Let it be a letter of praise, encouragement, appreciation or a statement of belief in their dream. Read it to them and then give it to them.

4 Security

Without care or worry. "I feel safe". "Things will work out". With your wife, make her feel secure in your relationship and she will move mountains for you!

God in Action

Prov 3:25-26

²⁵ *Have no fear of sudden disaster or of the ruin that overtakes the wicked,*

²⁶ *for the Lord will be at your side and will keep your foot from being snared.*

Ps 27:3

Though an army besiege me, my heart will not fear; though war break out against me, even then I will be confident.

Heb 4:16

Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

Esteem Builders

- When you verbalise your commitment to me
- When you pray for me in general
- When you tell me how much you love me
- When you are tender with me
- When you listen with empathy
- When you pray for me or get me medicine when I am sick
- When you kiss me hello or goodbye
- When you verbally affirm my appearance
- When you hug me affectionately
- When you comfort me
- When you verbally affirm me in front of others
- When you pro-actively plan for the family's needs
- When you tuck me in bed
- When you assist me in problem-solving
- When you show me that I come first, before your work, friends and hobbies

Security Project:

- Make a list of your spouse or children's insecurities
- Where do you think they come from?
- What can you do to minister healing in these areas?

5 Significance

"I matter". "I contribute". "I can make a difference".

"True significance is found as we invest in a cause that will outlive us." - Dennis & Barbara Rainey.

God in Action

Mt 10:29-31

²⁹ *Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground outside your Father's care.* ³⁰ *And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered.* ³¹ *So don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.*

Mt 18:12

"What do you think? If a man owns a hundred sheep, and one of them wanders away, will he not leave the ninety-nine on the hills and go to look for the one that wandered off?"

Gen 1:26

Then God said, "Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals,[a] and over all the creatures that move along the ground."

Esteem Builders

- When you invite me to watch a TV programme or movie
- When you take me on a date
- When you willingly offer to do menial tasks even when they are my chore to do
- When you inspire me to dream
- When you dream with me
- When you are fully present when I am speaking to you
- When you remind me of something in my world I have forgotten to do
- When you join me for a recreational activity that you don't like as much
- When you don't smother me.
- When you read to me
- When you buy me a gift
- When you give me a card with a message
- When you make me coffee or tea
- When you ask me follow through questions
- When you place value on my dreams not just your own.

Significance Project:

- What does your child, spouse or team member do differently when they feel that they are very significant as a person?
- What can you do this week that will reinforce their sense of significance?

6 Self-acceptance

I belong. I am loveable just as I am. I am accepted just as I am.

God in Action

Eph 2:10

For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

1 Peter 4:8

Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins.

Song of Songs 4:7

You are altogether beautiful, my darling; there is no flaw in you.

Romans 9:20

But who are you, a human being, to talk back to God? "Shall what is formed say to the one who formed it, 'Why did you make me like this?'"

Esteem Builders

- When you communicate acceptance of my imperfect past
- When you laugh at my jokes
- When you play me my favourite songs
- When you take into consideration my recreational preferences.
- When you allow me to be myself
- When you value me as a powerful human being with my own unique taste (in clothes, hairstyles, sport, food, movies, humour, etc).

Self-acceptance Project:

- List any differences between you and your loved ones that continually bother you?
- How are these actually strengths that are sometimes overused or overextended?
- Pray for your spouse that the strengths of these traits would manifest more.
- Why do these things push your buttons?
- Begin to thank God for the strengths associated with the overuse.
- Do you need to repent of any judgements you made or inappropriate reactions you have had?