FOSTERING SELF-ESTEEM

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As many of us know, self-esteem is crucial to a child's development and sense of self. It is a significant determinant in the decisions a child will make on the path to adulthood. Self-esteem also seems to be the foundation for self-confidence. The concept of self-esteem has been around for years and has been given many definitions. For the purpose of this article I will define it as the ability to see oneself as capable and competent, lovable and loving, as well as, unique and valuable. So how do we foster these qualities in children so they may grow into healthy confident adults?

At a recent workshop I attended, Amy Lew, Ph.D. and co-author of the book, Raising Kids Who Can, stressed the importance of focusing on "The Crucial Cs" to help foster self-esteem. These include: connect, capable, count, and courage. Her theory is that each "Crucial C" can have an enormous positive effect when it is present, as well as, an equally strong negative effect when it is absent.

CONNECT - the need to believe one can make a difference

When children believe they count, they feel valuable. They are able to participate in school activities and feel they have something to contribute to society. When children do not believe they count, they may feel insignificant or worthless. This could lead to antisocial behaviors such as isolation or aggression towards others.

COURAGE - the need to believe one can handle what comes

When children have courage, they feel equal, confident, and hopeful. They are willing to try new things and face challenges. When courage is absent, intense fear can set in which may lead children to feel inferior, defeated, or hopeless. They may avoid situations or discount their own abilities.

The ideas touched upon through the "Crucial C's" demonstrate how children have a basic set of needs that promote self-esteem. These needs require role models for teaching good communication skills, self-discipline, self-worth and good judgment.

TAKING TIME TO TEND TO "THE CRUCIAL Cs"

Taking time to tend to "The Crucial Cs" may not only foster self-esteem in children but may foster a better world.