

Positive parenting & self-esteem

"Some of my friends moan that their parents are too busy for them. But my mum's great - she always finds time to talk to us about stuff and makes us feel special - I know I can talk to her about anything."

- Children need to feel secure, loved and valued - this is the basis of self-esteem and confidence
- Noticing and rewarding good behaviour is the best way of influencing your child's behaviour
- Be realistic about what you expect from your child
- Parents and carers need to work together and be consistent
- Listen to and talk to your child - it's good to talk!
- Do things together with your child that you both enjoy - have fun!
- Encourage discussion

Make them feel great!

Positive parenting is about bringing out the best in your child, by listening and understanding, praising and encouraging their efforts, noticing and rewarding good behaviour and doing things together that you both enjoy.

This starts from the earliest days of your relationship with your child.

In trying to be helpful, it is often easy to point out where a child is going wrong and forget to notice the things that go right. By doing this you are unwittingly giving your child lots of attention for negative unwanted behaviour, rather than for the good behaviour you would prefer them to develop. It can also undermine your relationship with your child. Parental attention and praise is one of the biggest motivators for children so you need to use it in the right direction! Not only will this influence your child's behaviour in a positive way, it will also make your child feel happy, loved, wanted and secure and this is the basis of life-long confidence and self-esteem.

A sense of self-esteem is your child's best protection from peer pressure. You can help to foster this in many ways, for example by being a positive role model, giving positive accurate feedback, identifying and redirecting your child's inaccurate beliefs and by being spontaneous and affectionate. Make them feel great!

Encouraging your child to eat healthily does not mean denying them food they enjoy. Healthy eating is about having a varied, balanced diet and enjoying lots of different foods. Younger children often refuse to eat certain foods and teenagers may go through food fads. These differences are normal. But some eating problems are more serious and if you are recognising signs of difficulties, contact a health professional for advice and support.

Promoting the health of your child is a task that most parents do without thinking. Whether it involves encouraging your child to brush their teeth, keep fit by sport and regular physical exercise, and reminding them to pay attention to personal hygiene, you are an important source of information and advice and an influential role model for your child.

Teenagers have to learn to make their own decisions and establish their independence from their parents. Unfortunately their decisions might not always agree with yours. That is why tension is normal. Choose your battles and let some go! Be friendly and supportive and let them know you have been through it and that you are always willing to talk. The main concern for adolescents is whether what they are going through is normal. Remember to give them the practical information they need about the physical changes and reassure them that their physical development is perfectly normal.

WARNING SIGNS

There may be none. Is your child eating well? Getting enough exercise? Any changes in their behaviour? Is your child trying to tell you something?

ACTION

Be involved and develop a good relationship with your child before they reach their teens. Adopt a healthy lifestyle. Share activities together.

WHAT TO SAY

With younger children, set boundaries. With teenagers, remember that you are in charge. Even if you only get a grunt, don't give up on communication.

PREVENTION

Be a little crazy! Have fun with your child. Encourage good friendship and outside interests. Listen carefully to your child's point of view. Help them think through choices.

CONTACTS

- Ask Wiltshire
08457 585 072
- Eating Disorders Association
0845 634 7650
- Parentline Plus
0808 800 2222
- Local SureStart:
Chippenham
01249 463907
Melksham
01225 709594
Services Cotswold Centre
01225 810537
The Avenue, Warminster
01985 213383
- School Start:
North Wiltshire
01249 464842
West Wiltshire
01225 751261
Kennet
01980 846164
South Wiltshire
01722 743472

*Check the Wiltshire ACPC website for the latest phone numbers:
www.wiltshire.gov.uk*