

For Principal Newsletters – Use Where Appropriate

February 2020

Raising Confident Kids

*“Inaction breeds doubt and fear. Action breeds confidence and courage.
If you want to conquer fear, do not sit home and think about it. Go out and get busy.”*

~ Dale Carnegie

Sounds easy to our adult minds, doesn't it? But, how do we instill confidence in our children? That's the real challenge. Confidence is a feeling of self-assurance arising from one's appreciation of one's own abilities or qualities. Confident people don't always have successful outcomes, but they produce successful efforts. There's a world of difference in this. You may not get the job you were interviewing for, but you can be pleased and proud that you presented yourself in your best light. Here are some confidence-building strategies to incorporate into your parenting repertoire.

1. *Expect the best of your child's characteristics.*

Focus on your child's personal qualities, such as persistence, compassion, and wisdom. When these qualities are in place, achievements become more attainable. When these qualities are absent, success is an empty achievement. And, during times when your child is facing difficulties, reminding them of their qualities with language like, "I'm always so impressed with your smart thinking and compassion. What happened here?" can go a long way toward helping your child reflect and learn from poor decisions or challenging experiences.

2. *Praise effort more than success.*

When my son was in middle school, he tried out for the school's soccer team. He had been playing with the township recreation league for years and enjoyed playing, and trying out for the competitive school team was an entirely new experience. He attended the practices and met some new friends and, ultimately, was not selected for the team. When we talked about this news later in the day, I asked how he was feeling about the experience. He was a bit disappointed, but not devastated. I encouraged my son to write a thank you note to the coach, which he did. The coach found my son later and gave him terrific feedback. Further, he said that he'd like to see my son try out again next year. This left my son feeling confident about the experience, despite not making the team.

3. *Mistakes are steps of learning.*

Keep on trying. None of us was perfect the first time we tried something.

4. *Avoiding the "Interviewing for Pain" Trap*

Lawrence Cohen, in his book *The Opposite of Worry*, encourages us to avoid "interviewing for pain". Some parents greet their children with, "Did anything bad happen today?" or "Did so-and-so bother you again?" instead of more positive or neutral prompts. When children speak openly about their experiences, parents can highlight positive behaviors, name them, and praise them.

Awesome resources for this article:

Crazy-Stressed: Saving Today's Overwhelmed Teens with Love, Laughter, and the Science of Resilience by
Dr. Michael Bradley

The Opposite of Worry by Dr. Lawrence Cohen