

Identity formation and self-image

Talking to your child about positive self-esteem, realistic self-image and self-confidence can build your child's resilience skills to help them deal with challenges and opportunities they may face.

Key messages

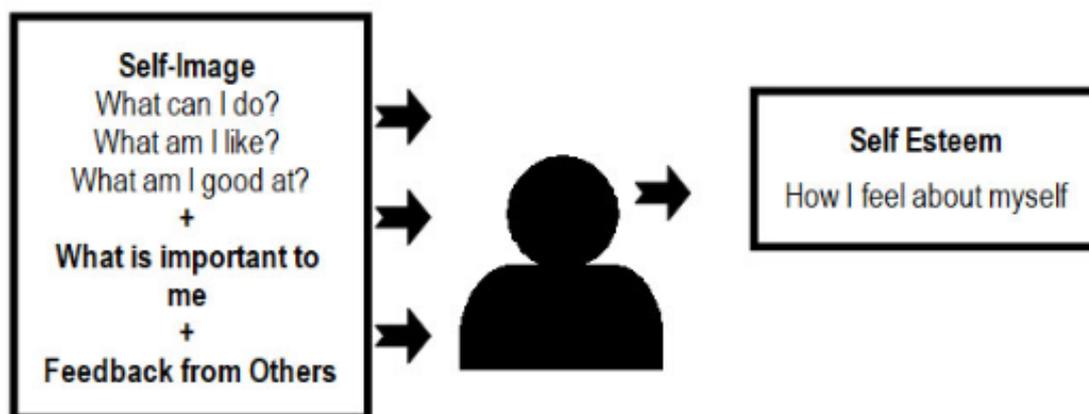
Self-esteem is the way we feel about ourselves.

- Self-image is the collection of thoughts we have about who we are and what we can do.
- Parents and teachers of children who are Deaf or hard of hearing can help to develop children's positive self-image and self-esteem.

What is self-esteem?

Self-esteem refers to the way we feel about ourselves. We compare how we see ourselves, how we believe others see us, and how we would like to be.

HOW WE DEVELOP OUR SELF-ESTEEM



The self-image (How you see yourself now)

Self-image is the collection of thoughts a person has about who they are and what they can do. As a child grows and learns new skills, they think about who they are and what they can do. This forms their self-image.

The ideal image (How I want to be).

The ideal image is a child's thoughts and ideas about who they want to be or what they want to do. It is a child's goals, dreams and expectations about themselves.

Children will compare how they see themselves now (self-image) with how they want to be (ideal image).

Examples of self-image and ideal image

Self-image	→	Ideal image
I did well in my spelling test	→	I want to get a good end of year report
I get on well with my friends	→	I would like to be popular with my classmates
I played well at basketball this season	→	I want to make the state basketball team

If ideal image is too high or too low?

If a child's ideal image is not realistic, it creates a big gap between their self-image (how they see themselves now) and their ideal image (how they want to be), which can lead to poor self-esteem and a negative attitude about trying new things and coping with mistakes.

if a child's self-image is lower than their abilities or what they are capable of, they may not try new things because they believe they will fail.

Adapted from STARS- Straight talking about self-esteem, Erin Erceg, Clare Roberts Curtin University

Tips to help your child develop a positive self-image

Children are concerned about self-image. Their minds are full of questions about themselves as they form their identity. Perhaps important questions are:

- Who am I?
- What kind of person am I?
- Where do I fit in?

Children's sense of identity is significantly affected by statements which begin with the words, 'you are', especially if they come from people who are significant in their lives. We call these 'you messages'. These messages can be positive "You are a terrific kid" or negative "You are so bad".

As important people in your children's lives, remember to use **positive** 'you messages'. Even if your child has done something wrong, a positive 'you message' can be used. For example "You are always respectful, but I won't allow you to speak to me like that."

Adapted from STARS- Straight talking about self-esteem, Erin Erceg, Clare Roberts Curtin University

Tips to help develop your child's self-esteem

- You can help build your child's sense of self-worth and confidence – don't underestimate your child because they are Deaf or hard of hearing. Involve them in activities such as swimming, music, dance, sports, art, etc to build their confidence.
- Help your child to think about and develop their strengths and abilities while scaffolding their weaknesses, e.g. if your child is good in art, but does not feel confident in speaking, use their drawing to allow your child time to talk about it.
- Encourage and scaffold your child to try new activities.
- Encourage your child to be open and honest with their feelings – it is okay for them to show their feelings in ways that do not hurt others.
- Help your child find solutions to problems rather than giving them the answers. Ask questions like, "What could you do?" and "What do you think?".
- Listen to your child and show them that you value them and what they have to say.
- Foster their growing need for independence. Begin with basics like caring for their own belongings, making their own bed, or feeding pets.

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