

Tips to Help Develop Confidence & Empathy

Take a positive parenting approach. Here are a few tips:

- Treat children with kindness, care, and respect. Children who are treated well are more likely to treat their peers well.
- Model for your child how others should be treated. Demonstrate how to welcome someone to your home or greet them when you meet at the park.
- Help children understand the consequences of their actions. Starting as young as toddlers, without blaming, point out the results of aggression: "When you hit Ian, it hurts him. Look, he is crying."
- Give information and direct guidance specific to the situation. "When you are with your friends, you can't talk all the time. You have to listen sometimes too."
- Play "perspective-taking" games during waiting times at the doctor's office or while commuting to help kids develop empathy. For example, ask, "What would happen if you lived in a really cold place, but didn't have a coat?" or "What if everyone else got to play but you were left out. How would you feel?" Let your child also ask you questions, but be prepared that some may be silly.
- Keep the lines of communication open between you and your child.

Tips to Raise Confident Children

Here are some parenting tips that lead to confident and empathetic children.

- Offer chances for your child to try things on her own. For example, let her carry a cup of water to the table even if it means there are a few spills.
- Give your child small jobs and responsibilities like feeding the pets or watering plants.
- Offer your child some opportunities to solve problems on his own, while staying close by if you are needed. For example, if your toddler crawls under a chair and gets stuck, don't immediately help him out. Stay close by and coach, "What if you put your arm out first and maybe scrunch down a little?" Problem solving is an important skill that your child will need again and again in life and building this skill can start early. Older children also need chances to try solving problems that come up with their peers.

Encourage empathy through:

- Giving your child opportunities to be with children younger or less able.
- Volunteering together as a family and helping your kids understand the importance of helping others who are in need.
- Teach young children tolerance and acceptance by modeling how you respect every kind of difference in people: age, size, religion, sexual orientation, skin color, language, etc. When you model treating all people with respect, your child will learn to do the same. Unfortunately, the opposite is also true.

We want our children to be confident and want to raise them to be empathetic so they can handle the situations they are confronted with. The best way to encourage these qualities is to treat children respectfully, show your confidence in them, model kind treatment of others, and give them chances to solve problems. In general, good parenting practices that apply in other situations as well will help build your child's confidence.

EXCERPTS and ADAPTED FROM: Bright Horizons Education Team

Submitted to FOCM, Inc. by Pat Sneed

