

Confidence Age 14 Summary

Why Confidence?

Confidence simply means self-belief. But where does that belief come from? It begins with a trusting relationship you work to cultivate with your child/teen. Your bond with your child/teen forms a solid foundation from which a child/teen can explore the world.

Tip: These steps are best done when you and your child/teen are not tired or in a rush.

Tip Intentional communication and building a healthy parenting relationship will support these steps.

STEP 1



Get Your Child/Teen Thinking by Getting Their Input

- Explore the issue by building from success and strengths. Consider together what your child/teen is working on at school.
 - *“Remember last year when you presented in front of the middle school? How did you feel at the start? In the middle? How did you feel when you finished and everyone applauded?”*
 - *“What helped you get through that learning challenge?”*
- If your child/teen feels insecure in their friendships, ask key questions about that specific issue first to understand what’s challenging your child/teen.
 - *“I know a lot is going on this year with your friends. Tell me a little bit about what some of the struggles are.”*
 - *“I’ve noticed you talk about this particular friend a lot. What makes her such a good friend to you? What do you appreciate about her?”*

STEP 2



Teach New Skills

- Cultivate a growth mindset. For example, when your child/teen says, “This is dumb!” and you know your child/teen means, “I can’t do it!” you could respond with:
 - *“I know things can feel frustrating when you first start.”*
 - *“I’m going to hang in there with you while you get through the challenging part.”*

- *"You can learn anything with time, practice, and hard work."*
 - *"You can meet or overcome any challenge with time, practice, and hard work."*
 - *"Remember that you did it even when you thought you couldn't?"*
- If your child/teen says, *"The kids are horrible at school!"* you can respond with:
 - *"Sometimes what your friends do feels like it doesn't make sense. How do you wish they would behave?"*
 - *"You know how to be a good friend (share specific examples). Your classmates will want to be friends with you because you are a good friend."*
- Talk with your child/teen about superheroes or people that they admire. Ask: *"What qualities do they have? What gives them the confidence to engage in any situation? What qualities do you already have?"*
- Teach your child/teen about self-talk.
 - Use reflective listening for the unspoken message, such as, *"I can see that you are telling yourself you're not good at this. Unfortunately, telling yourself you can't do it can hurt your chance of meeting your goal. How can we turn that message around to help you?"*
 - Ask and invite your child/teen to think about how to reframe that self-talk.
 - Reinforce your child's/teen's response if it's positive or provide ways to frame thinking positively, such as, *"I know if I work hard at this, I can figure it out."*
 - Practice the new language together. Provide specific feedback when you see your child/teen using that new language using *"I notice..."* statements.

STEP 3



Practice to Grow Skills and Develop Habits

- Allow your child/teen the chance to take steps to meet their significant challenges, taking responsibility for their tasks or relationships -- even when you know you could do it faster and better.
- Be sure to consider how to create conditions to support their success.
- Talk with your child/teen about what makes them feel confident and what takes away their confidence. Share your responses and the skills you use when you don't feel confident.

STEP 4



Support Your Child's/Teen's Development and Success

- Initially, your child/teen may need active support. Use *"I'd love to see..."* or *"What do you need..."* statements. *"Before you go up in front of the class to solve a math problem on the board, what will you say to yourself to stay calm and confident?"*
- Don't move on quickly if your child/teen shows interest in trying something new. Children/teens often need more time to stick with a challenge or pursue a goal. Be sure to wait long enough for your child/teen to show you they are competent. Your waiting could make all the difference in whether they can gain skills over time.

- Recognize effort by using “I notice...” statements like, *“I noticed how you asked the coach for clarification when you were unsure about her instructions.”* or *“I noticed you opted for a more challenging assignment. Great work!”*
- On days with extra challenges: *“I know this is a challenging space for you, and I have all the faith in the world that you will make it through.”*
- Actively reflect on how your child/teen feels when approaching challenges: *“How are you feeling about your final assignment at school?”* or *“It seems like you got frustrated with your homework and just stopped. Did your teacher mention that your homework was incomplete?”*

STEP 5



Recognize Efforts

- No matter how old your child/teen is, your positive reinforcement and encouragement have a significant impact.
- You can reinforce your child's/teen's efforts in many ways. It is essential to distinguish between three types of reinforcement – recognition, rewards, and bribes. These three parenting behaviors impact your child's/teen's behavior differently.
 - **Recognize** even small successes to promote positive behaviors and expand confidence: *“You asked your teacher your questions about your assignment--that takes a lot of courage!”* Recognition can include nonverbal acknowledgment such as a smile, high five, or hug.
 - **Rewards** can be helpful in certain situations by providing a concrete, timely, and positive incentive for doing a good job. A reward is determined ahead of time so that the child/teen knows what to expect, like *“If you give the orchestra audition a try, we will go get ice cream to celebrate.”* (if you XX, then I'll XX) The goal should be to help your child/teen progress to a time when the reward will no longer be needed. Rewards can decrease a child's/teen's internal motivation if used too often.
 - Unlike a reward, **bribes** aren't planned ahead of time and generally happen when a parent or those in a parenting role is in a crisis (like a child/teen arguing and refusing to leave a social gathering. To avoid disaster, a parent or those in a parenting role offers to stop for ice cream on the way home if the child/teen will stop arguing and leave the event). While bribes can be helpful in the short term to manage stressful situations, they will not grow lasting motivation or behavior change and should be avoided.
- Build celebrations into your routine. For example, snuggle and read before bed after working through math homework together.

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