

Confidence Age 15 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 teen. Your bond with your teen forms a solid foundation from which a teen can explore the world.

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

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

STEP

1



GET INPUT

Get Your Teen Thinking by Getting Their Input

- Explore the issue by building from success and strengths.
- Consider together what your teen is working on at school.
 - *“Remember last year when you had to write your first research paper? How did you feel at the start? In the middle? How did you feel when you finished and the teacher liked it?”*
 - *“What helped you get through that learning challenge?”*
- If your teen feels insecure in making or keeping friends, ask key questions about that specific issue first to understand what’s challenging for your teen.
 - *“How can you start up a conversation with a classmate?”*
 - *“What does a good friend say and do?”*
 - *“How can you act in ways that will be a good friend to others?”*

STEP

2



TEACH

Teach New Skills

- Cultivate a growth mindset. For example, when your teen says, “I can’t do it,” respond with:
 - “You can learn anything with time, practice, and hard work.”
 - “You can meet or overcome any challenge with time, practice, and hard work.”
 - “Remember when you did it even when you thought you couldn’t?”

Or, if your teen says, “No one likes me,” you can respond with:

- “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.”

Or, if your teen says, “You hate me!” or “You don’t care!” you can respond with:

- “I always love you. I always care, no matter what. Sometimes, your choices upset me, but my love never changes.”
- Teach your teen about self-talk.
 - Use reflective listening for the unspoken message, such as, “I can see that you are telling yourself you can’t do it; is that right? 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?”
- Together, seek opportunities to expose your teen to new things through volunteer time.

Trap Don’t fix your teen’s mistakes. If you notice errors in their homework, leave it and allow your teen to learn from it unless your teen invites your support and input.

STEP
3



Practice to Grow Skills and Develop Habits

- Allow your 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 you can create the conditions to support their success (like creating a quiet, organized environment with school tools at the ready in which they can complete their homework).
- Talk with your 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 Teen’s Development and Success

- Initially, your teen may need active support. Use “I’d love to see...” statements with a positive tone and body language to express excitement and curiosity and ask them to demonstrate how they can work hard toward a goal. *“I’d love to see how you speak constructively with your teacher about your concerns.”*
- Don’t move on quickly if your teen shows interest in trying something new. Teens often need more time to stick with a challenge or pursue a goal. Be sure to wait long enough for your teen to show you they are competent. Your waiting could make all the difference in whether they can gain skills over time.
- Recognize effort using “I notice...” statements like, *“I notice how you took a brain break and then got back to your homework -- that’s smart!”*

- In a gentle, non-public way, you can whisper in their ear, *“Remember how you introduced yourself last week to a new friend? How can you use that experience here?”*
- Actively reflect on how your teen is feeling when approaching challenges. *“How are you feeling about your free time at school?”* or *“It seems you got frustrated with your homework and just stopped. Can you share with me what you were feeling when you stopped? Can I help in any way?”*

STEP
5



Recognize Efforts

- No matter how old your teen is, your positive reinforcement and encouragement have a significant impact.
- There are many ways you can reinforce your teen’s efforts. It is essential to distinguish between three types of reinforcement – recognition, rewards, and bribes. These three distinct parenting behaviors have different impacts on your teen’s behavior.
 - **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 teen knows what to expect, like *“If you can demonstrate that you can advocate for yourself by asking your teacher about your project, then you can go to the movies with your friends.”* (if you XX, then I’ll XX) The goal should be to help your teen progress to a time when the reward will no longer be needed. If used too often, rewards can decrease a teen’s internal motivation.
 - 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 teen arguing and refusing to leave a social gathering. To avoid disaster, a parent or those in a parenting role offers to stop for a treat on the way home if the teen stops arguing and leaves 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, after completing all the weekend household chores together, have a pizza and game night.

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