

Build 'Em Up

“Build ‘Em Up”

Self-esteem in students

by Michael Auden

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Written by Michael Auden

Centre for Leadership in Education in association with Ask Uncle Mike Books.

www.askunclemike.com

Michael@michaelauden.com.au

8 Greenlinks Ave Coffs Harbour NSW 2450

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Build 'em Up – Self Esteem

1

How a boy feels about himself is one of the basic pillars upon which his future success in school and in life depends.



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We adults have so much influence, whether we realize it or not.

Whether or not exhorting kids to feel good about themselves has any effect at all on their self-esteem, **helping them** to do **something** they can be **proud** of is **bound to help**.

Of all the judgments and beliefs that each one of us own, none is more important than the ones we have about ourselves. As a parent, our **primary concern** ought to focus on what our **sons think of themselves**.

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The beliefs about themselves are the single most telling factors in determining your son's success and happiness in life.

Your son's self-image is a direct result of the kind of reinforcements he receives from you on a daily basis.

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Don't ask, "What do I think of my son?" or "What do his teachers think of him?" but...

... "What does he think of himself?"

Does he feel good about the way he looks?

Does he have confidence in his ability to undertake challenges?

Does he think of himself as worthy?

Does he feel intelligent?

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The barriers we erect to our own growth and development are almost always **internal barriers**.

The job of motivating your son to have greater aspirations in life is essentially the task of **working on their self-pictures** in all areas of their young life.

Any area where you find negativity, pessimism, or indifference about their abilities or dreams, **you have an assignment** for self-improvement to work on.

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Self-image

Teen boys have multiple self-images. These shift between being **highly positive and fearfully negative.**

In the morning your son may feel like a macho man with the girls, and after lunch he may revert to being a shy introvert.

The most significant areas for your concern as a parent is with his overall self-portrait.

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A teen boy's self-portrait

Self-Worth

This term describes his view of himself as a person. It may begin with how he sees other people viewing him. If you treat your **son as important, worthy, attractive**, then he will generally come to believe the same things about himself.

Teach your son to look within. Encourage him to see **himself as worthwhile**, even if he fails at something.

If he is encouraged to see himself as worthwhile, as significant and

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important regardless of performance, then he will have self-worth.

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It is critical that we **accept responsibility** to do all we can to keep our son from **assessing himself as worthless**.

Chronic underachievers have an inner attitude of **“I’m really not worthwhile, no one ever thought of me as successful, and I just don’t think of myself as very important.”**

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Self-Confidence

A boy with a positive self-worth may lack confidence in parts of his life. He may feel self-confident around his mother but be a nervous wreck in the company of his teacher for instance.

Self-confidence is measured in **behaviour** terms, while self-worth is assessed in **attitudinal** ways.

Teaching your son **new behaviours** is the avenue for building and **sustaining self-confidence**.

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Self-confidence is made up of:

Willingness to take risks

Ability to challenge oneself

Capacity for courage and assertiveness

All of these themes revolve around one key word:

ACTION

You **build confidence by doing**: not by worrying,

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thinking about it, talking about it, but by doing.

We must keep in mind in helping our sons to gain self-confidence the importance of their becoming people **who challenge themselves, who are willing to take risks**, and who have no fear of unwillingness to take risks.

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Treating your son as if he already is already what he can become is the **greatest self-confidence booster** there is.

Don't be the parent who points out flaws and reminds him that he has limited abilities.

Convey to him that you believe in his abilities.

Your sons **self-worth** must be a **given**, not something to be proven.

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How we lower self-confidence in our sons

- Telling him he is a bad boy
- Telling him he is good only when he behaves properly
- Constantly catching him doing something wrong
- Using pet names that are putdowns. *Shorty, dumbo, fatso, nerd.*
- Viewing your son as a 'apprentice person' who have not arrived as total human beings
- Treating boys as part of a whole, rather than as individuals
- Not giving our son responsibility

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- Criticizing your son when he makes a mistake
- Speaking for your son, rather than allowing him to speak for himself
- Modeling to your son that you are not confident and worthy
- Talking about your son in front of him as though he were not there
- Keeping a distance from your son – refusing to kiss, hold, wrestle or play with him

Basic principles for building self-esteem in your son



- You must model self-respect
- Treat your son as an individual
- A son is not his actions but a boy who acts
- Provide opportunities to be responsible and make decisions

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- Teach enjoyment of life every day
- Provide praise rather than criticism
- We become what we think about

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Strategies for raising your son's self-portrait

- Encourage your son to be a risk-taker rather than always taking the safe road
- Discourage your son from any and all self-put-downs
- Make an effort to reduce the emphasis on external measures of success
- Work at reducing complaining and whining behaviour

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- Focus your **criticisms on actions**, not on the value of the person
- Encourage your son to be excited about everything in life.
- Help them avoid the “I’m bored” routine.
- Encourage your son to be independent rather than dependent
- Teach your son to be non-judgmental
- Encourage your son to be honest with himself
- Be aware of the importance of appearance in teen boys

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- Encourage your son to think in healthy rather than in sick ways
- Catch your son **doing something right**, and remind them on a regular basis of how terrific they are
- Treat your son as though he has arrived as a total, complete human
- Give your son an opportunity to be a unique and special person
- Hold him, touch him, kiss him, **be physical with him**
- If you want him to feel attractive, beautiful, competent, and healthy, then show him a person who lives that way

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- Listen carefully to your son
- Be involved in his age-related activities
- Encourage him to have his friends 'hangout' at your home
- Read aloud with him at all ages
- Be supportive of his efforts to be independent
- Help him develop **positive self-pictures** in his head
- Teach him to avoid self-destructive self-talk

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A teen boy's self-image is the most important factor in his **happiness and fulfillment.**

A boy who believes that the world is a good and miraculous place, and that **he is special and loved**, has a tremendous advantage over a boy who is doubting and negative.

When you send highly charged positive signals to your teen son, he begins to have an **expectation of happiness and success**, he become eager to meet new people, he enjoys challenges, and – most important – he will be loving, open, and generous toward others.

2

How can I communicate better with my boys?



Young adolescents often aren't great communicators, particularly with their parents and other adults who love them.

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Young teens often feel they can talk with anyone else better than with their parents—even wonderful parents.

They tend to be private.

They don't necessarily want to tell you what they did at school today.”

The key is to be inquisitive but not interfering, working to respect your child's privacy as you establish trust and closeness.

It's easiest to communicate with a young teen if you established this habit when your child was little.

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Walk and talk

Take your son for a walk in the park. Play a game of basketball where you are not looking at each other, but at a target.

Talk while in the car driving to soccer training.

Do anything where he has the opportunity to look anywhere except into your face.

Males think more effectively and communicate more openly when they can move while talking and have freedom to look about them.

Never say, “Look at me when I am talking¹”

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Realize that no recipe exists for successful communication.

What works for getting one child to talk about what's important doesn't always work with another one.

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Listen. You need to spend a lot of time not talking.

To listen means to avoid interrupting and it means to pay close attention. This is best done in a quiet place with no distractions. It's hard to listen carefully if you're also trying to cook dinner or watch television. Often just talking with your child about a problem or an issue helps to clarify things. Sometimes the less you offer advice, the more your young teen may ask you for it. Listening can also be the best way to uncover a more serious problem that requires your attention.

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Create opportunities to talk.

To communicate with your child you need to make yourself available. Young adolescents resist “scheduled” talks; they don’t open up when you tell them to, **but when they want** to. Some teens like to talk when they first get home from school. Others may like to talk at the dinner table or at bedtime. Some parents talk with their children in the car, preferably when the radio, tapes and CDs aren’t playing. Take your son to a mall—not the closer one, but the cooler one that is an hour and a half away. Many of the **best conversations grow out of shared activities**. Parents, try to grab odd moments and have a deep communication with your son. Boys are frustrated because it

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doesn't happen.

Talk over differences.

Communication breaks down for some parents because they find it hard to manage differences with their child.

It's often easiest to limit these differences when you have put in place clear expectations. If your 13-year-old son knows he's to be home by 9:30 p.m.—and if he knows the consequences for not meeting this curfew—the likelihood that he will be home on time increases.

Differences of opinion are easier to manage when we recognize that these differences can provide **important opportunities for us to rethink** the limits and to negotiate new ones, a skill

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that is valuable for your child to develop. For example, when your son is 14, setting a later curfew for some occasions may be fine. Such negotiations are possible because of your child's growing cognitive skills and ability to reason and consider many possibilities and views. Because he can consider that his curfew should be later on the weekend than on school nights, your insistence that "it doesn't matter" will only create a conflict.

When differences arise, telling your child your concerns **firmly but calmly** can prevent differences from becoming battles. Explaining why your child made or wants to make a poor choice is more constructive: "Dropping out of your algebra class will cut off lots of choices for you in the future. Some colleges won't admit you without two years of algebra, plus geometry and some trigonometry. Let's get

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you some help with algebra.”

Avoid over-reacting.

Responding too strongly can lead to yelling and screaming and it can shut down conversation. Try to **keep anxiety and emotions out of the conversation**—then kids will open up. Instead of getting riled up, it's better to ask, “What do you think about what you did? Let's talk about this.”

Kids are more likely to be open if they look at you as somebody who is not going to spread their secrets or get extremely upset if they confess something to you. If your kid says, “I've got to tell you something. Friday

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night I tried beer,' and you go off the deep end, your kid won't tell you again.

At a time when they are already judging themselves critically, adolescents make themselves vulnerable when they open up to parents. We know that the best way to encourage a behavior is to reward it. If you are critical when your teenager talks to you, what he sees is that his openness gets punished rather than rewarded.

Talk about things that are important to your young teen.

Different youngsters like to talk about different things. Some of the things they talk about may not seem important to you. With kids, sometimes it's like a different culture. You need to try to understand this, to put yourself in their place and time. Don't pretend to be excited about something that bores you. By asking questions and listening, however, you can show your child that you respect his feelings and opinions.

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Communicate with kindness and respect.

Young teens can say or do things that are outrageous or mean-spirited or both. However hard your child pushes your buttons, it's best to respond calmly. The respect and self-control that you display in talks with your child may some day be reflected in his conversations with others.

How you say something is as important as what you say. “Stop picking at your face” can reduce a young adolescent to tears. “Your room looks like a pigsty” isn't as helpful as, “You need to spend some time picking up your room. The job will be easier if you spend 5 minutes right now picking the clothes up off the floor—putting the dirty ones in the hamper and hanging the clean ones up. After lunch you can spend 5 minutes straightening up your bookshelf.” Youngsters also pay attention to the tone of your voice. A 14-year-old can easily tell a calm voice from an angry one.

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Kindness goes hand-in-hand with respect.

Communicating with respect also requires not talking down to adolescents. They are becoming more socially conscious and aware of events in the world and they appreciate thoughtful conversations.

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www.askunclemike.com

Michael@michaelauden.com.au

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