



## Positive Self-Esteem is Important for Children and Youth

By Rachel Kornilakis LLMSW, Trauma Therapist, and Adoptive Mom

We've been exploring Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs and how they relate to children not living with their family of origin through a recent series of PARC newsletter articles. In this edition we are discussing the fourth level in Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, which is Esteem. Maslow believed that once a person's more basic needs are met, they then become motivated by a desire to gain the respect of others and the desire for appreciation. Most of us would agree that humans have a strong desire to be accepted and valued by others and recognize self-esteem and self-respect as healthy personal attributes. Children have the same desires and needs.

Kids with low self-esteem may struggle at school, at home and with friends. They may feel unsure of themselves and may give up easily, or not try at all. If they think others won't accept them, they may not join in or they may let others treat them poorly. Kids with low self-esteem find it hard to cope and may not have hope for the future.

Helping children build esteem can be difficult especially for those who have a history of broken attachments, trauma or neglect. This may be seen as a distorted sense of self or may be heavily impacted by guilt, shame, grief and loss. Many children blame themselves for their past experiences and struggle with feelings of

worthlessness. Understanding how a child's past impacts your children's sense of self-worth is an essential parenting skill.

The best way to help our children is through our care. Building a high level of empathy and understanding for your child is the first step towards helping your child build self-esteem. Once that has been achieved, families can then work to help their children participate in activities that help build resilience, esteem and self-worth. Responsive, nurturing, warm, protective caregivers provide an environment where children can heal and thrive.

Children can build self-esteem by knowing they are making a contribution and by being recognized for their efforts. Participation in extracurricular activities such as sports, plays, youth groups, volunteering, clubs, scouting, etc. are very beneficial for our children. Participation in these types of activities helps children build their self-esteem and provides them with a sense of mastery. These activities allow children to have positive peer activity, fosters healthy social development, and helps them build positive relationships with adults. These activities can also be utilized as coping skills and gives children the chance to have an appropriate outlet for stress. Additional ways to build self-esteem are listed on

# How Parents Can Build Self-Esteem

Adapted from <https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/self-esteem.html>

Every child is different. Self-esteem may come easier to some kids than others, but even if a child's self-esteem is low, it can be raised. Here are things parents can do to help kids feel good about themselves:

**Focus on strengths.** Pay attention to what your child does well and enjoys. Focus more on strengths than weaknesses if you want to help kids feel good about themselves. This improves behavior too.

**Praise your child, but do it wisely.** Of course, it's good to praise kids. Your praise is a way to show that you're proud. But some ways of praising kids can actually backfire. Here's how to do it right:

**Don't overpraise.** Praise that doesn't feel earned doesn't ring true. For example, telling a child he played a great game when he knows he didn't feels hollow and fake.

**Praise effort.** Avoid focusing praise only on results (such as getting an A) or fixed qualities (such as being smart or athletic). Instead, offer most of your praise for effort, progress, and attitude. For example: "I'm proud of you for practicing, you've really stuck with it." With this kind of praise, kids put effort into things, work toward goals, and try. When kids do that, they're more likely to succeed.

**Ban harsh criticism.** The messages kids hear about themselves from others easily translate into how they feel about themselves. Harsh words ("You're so lazy!") are harmful, not motivating. When kids hear negative messages about themselves, it harms their self-esteem. Correct kids with patience. Focus on what you want them to do next time. When needed, show them how.

**Let kids help and give.** Self-esteem grows when kids get to see that what they do matters to others. Kids can help out at home, do a service project at school, or do a favor for a sibling. Helping and kind acts build self-esteem and other good feelings.

**Help your child learn to do things.** At every age, there are new things for kids to learn. Learning how to do things helps self-esteem grow. Be sure your child gets a chance to learn, try, and feel proud.

**Be a good role model.** When you put effort into everyday tasks, you're setting a good example. Modeling the right attitude counts too.



# Moving from Surviving to Thriving

with Author Mike Berry

This past September, adoptive, foster, guardianship and kinship parents gathered together for a full day of training in Port Huron. The presenter was Mike Berry who is a writer, blogger, author, speaker, family consultant, and adoptive father of eight. Mike is passionate about helping weary and stressed out parents. His training included several strategies related to helping families move from feelings of barely surviving to ways to help families thrive. Mike put his content into four categories of parenting tips and education which included: self-care, your community, knowledge of trauma and Thriving through behavior Management. Below are a few bullet points from Mike's presentation that have been helpful to Mike, his wife, and the hundreds of families they have helped.

## Thrive through Self-Care

- ◆ Don't be afraid to call out for help.
- ◆ Schedule time for you.
- ◆ Breathe and recalibrate.
- ◆ Create routine and structure.
- ◆ Seek a community of support.
- ◆ Be grateful.
- ◆ Do something that makes you happy.
- ◆ Move (physically) and stay active.

## Thrive through Community

- ◆ Surround yourself and your family with people who get it.
- ◆ Find people who are willing to enter your life regardless of how chaotic it may appear and

will help

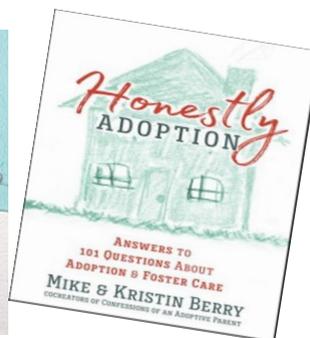
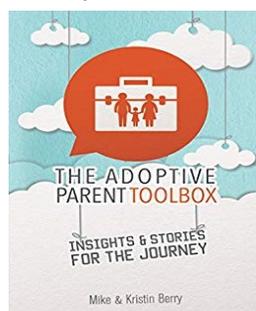
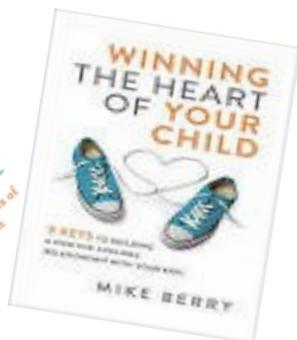
- ◆ Look for people who can be silent and listen when you feel broken.
- ◆ Get to know people who also feel as they are "in the trenches" too.
- ◆ Look for people who will point you the right direction.

## Thrive through Knowledge

- ◆ Remember every adopted child has experienced trauma.
- ◆ Trauma changes the brain and changes a child's perspective.
- ◆ Trauma histories can dictate present behaviors
- ◆ Trauma disrupts attachment.
- ◆ We heal through connection, trust, consistency and time.
- ◆ Trust heals trauma.
- ◆ Remind yourself of these facts daily.

## Thrive through Behavior Management

- ◆ Your first goal is re-regulation.
- ◆ Your tone (and reaction) determines the speed of escalation (and regulation).
- ◆ Surveying the trauma landscape is your child's behavior due to a trauma trigger.
- ◆ Identify the triggers and plan to avoid
- ◆ Connect with your child before trying to correct their behaviors.
- ◆ Determine the why behind the behavior.
- ◆ Invite your child to try to understand what is driving their behaviors, to share this knowledge and to problem solve on how to resolve their concerns.



Several books and podcasts Mike and Kristen Berry are available.

# Region 6 Events

Build connections with and get support from others who truly understand!

## Monthly Support Group:

### **Family Connections Meeting – Flint**

Adoptive and guardian families are invited to receive support and build connections with others who share a similar story.

When: First Thursday of each month

Time: 6 - 8p.m.

Location: South Baptist Church G-4091 Van Slyke Rd.  
Flint, MI

Group starts with a potluck; please bring a dish to pass if you are able. Childcare provided for children 5 and over with RSVP.

RSVP to Luginia\_Srygley@judsoncenter.org or call 734-528-2004.

### **Adoptive, Guardian, Kinship and Foster Families–Lapeer**

When: Second Wednesday of each month

Time: 6:30 – 8:30p.m.

Location: St. Paul Lutheran Church 90 Millville Rd.  
Lapeer, MI

Come connect with families that share the same experiences.

RSVP to Somer\_Vickery@judsoncenter.org or call 810-732-8510.

## Trainings

1/4/20

Attachment Focused Therapeutic Parenting

Sandusky, MI



**Looking for a specific training topic or a way to connect to other adoptive/guardian families? - Contact PARC and we'll schedule something in your area.**

## Conferences

3/7/20

Staying Bonded Through Challenging Behaviors

Fenton, MI



**For a complete list of events, visit the calendar page on our website. Additional activities and resources are listed there as well!**

<http://www.parc-judson.org/calendar>



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