Dear Parents and Friends,

I received a touching e-mail a few weeks back from a mother, regarding her teenage daughter, in which she shared a concern that many readers have indicated a desire to learn more about. How do we help our children - at any age - to see and love themselves as God does?

It has never been easy to raise godly children in a secular culture - see the stories of Noah and Lot - but it is possible. Jocabed bathed the lives of her children in prayer and the results were astounding. Mordecai prayed for Esther and in doing so, not only did he teach by example, he helped facilitate the deliverance of God's people. What will our prayers accomplish in the lives of our children, both today and tomorrow?

In this issue we will look at how we can be "God's messenger of love" to our children. Special thanks to Dr. Donna Habenicht for her sound counsel in our Ask the Expert column.

May you be blessed!

Until next time…

Karen Pearson Editor, Adventist Parenting

P.S. Tell me how many people you helped subscribe to Adventist Parenting and be entered into a drawing for the chance to win your own copy of Prince of Dreams by Bradley Booth.

To subscribe: click here.
To unsubscribe: click here.
Regardless of what we call it, a healthy, godly, positive self-worth comes from God - not from ourselves. That is the issue. But because we are sinful, corrupt, infirm, broken, and fallen, the source of our self-image must originate in something outside of ourselves.

We can see throughout Scripture God's positive regard for us. It's as if He's saying, "You're much more valuable than you think!" Read aloud the following statements of how God values you:

"I will make a mortal more rare than fine gold, a man more than the golden wedge of Ophir" (Isaiah 13:12).

"Are not two sparrows sold for a copper coin? And not one of them falls to the ground apart from your Father's will. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Do not fear therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows" (Matthew 10:29-31).

"You are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light" (1 Peter 2:9).

Clearly, God values us and desires that we value ourselves accordingly!

 Taken from 13 Weeks to Peace by Jennifer Jill Schwirzer.

One reason for the spiritual feebleness of today is the low estimate that believers in Christ are constantly inclined to form of themselves. Christ paid an infinite price for us, and He desires His chosen heritage to value themselves according to the price He placed upon them. Do not disappoint Jesus by placing a low estimate upon yourselves.

From Signs of the Times, October 22, 1896 by Ellen G. White.

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**Prince of Dreams**

**Description:** Daniel had heard Prophet Jeremiah speak the word of the Lord. "Behold, I will send for Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, My servant, and will bring him against this land, and against its inhabitants, and will utterly destroy them." Now it had all come true. Daniel and his friends were prisoners of war. Would they continue to follow the Lord? Could God make a way for them to be faithful to Him? Bestselling author, Bradley Booth shows that it takes more than daring to be a Daniel.

Paperback, 160 pages.

Price: $10.99

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**Enter to Win**

Do you have a favorite Mother's Day memory?

Share it with us and your name will be entered into a drawing for Jennifer Jill Schwirzer's new book, 13 Weeks to Peace. The drawing will take place May 16, 2011 and the winner will be announced in the next newsletter.

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**Submit your entry**

Last month's winner is Elke Holly, from Alberta, Canada. Elke, thanks for your great suggestion of including a simple, kid-friendly recipe in each issue of Adventist Parenting. Your copy of The Connected Family, by Paul and Carolyn Rayne is on its way to you!

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**Ask the Expert**
### Ages 0 - 5
One of the first tasks of a baby is to become self-sufficient: to learn how to entertain himself, fall asleep unaided, and solve simple physical problems such as how to get from here to there. Next comes the task of learning how to take care of personal needs, such as body functions, dressing, playing, and making friends. Some parents hover so closely that they overprotect their children from natural consequences that would be wonderful learning opportunities. In doing so, Read more...

### Ages 6 - 9
Self-confidence is what helps a child attempt new and innovative tasks. But the path to success is often littered with multiple attempts that haven't worked out. How your child responds to mistakes or failure will determine whether or not he gives up or goes on when faced with challenges. That is why it is important to teach your child that just because something didn't succeed, it doesn't mean that he or she is a failure. Read more...

### Ages 10 - 14
Be sure your children hear in your words and see in your actions that they are special. Affirm them for who they are, rather than harping on what they should be. Get the message across that they are loved supremely, no matter what. Children need lessons in coping with words and acts that destroy self-esteem...and you will need to give them tools to cope. Attitude is the key. Read more...

### Ages 15 - 18
There are some important things you can do to build your teen's self-respect.

Play and work together at least once a week. Enjoy each other. Have fun together. Share jokes. Share a mutual hobby. Exercise together. Share a picnic at the beach or the park. Cook together. Prepare your teen for maturity. Competence builds self-respect, Read more...

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**Here's an Idea**

**Seven Ways to Help Grow a Child's Sense of Self Worth**

1. Choose a wall or display cabinet and name it using your family name: "Smiths Hall of Fame," and display trophies, photos, and awards. The constant reminder of your child's achievements will reinforce their confidence.

2. Give your children age-appropriate responsibilities. Successfully carrying out assigned tasks goes a long way in building self-confidence and developing a sense of responsibility. It will also help them feel needed, valued and capable.

3. Encourage your children to talk about how they are feeling. Set clear expectations regarding mutual respect and they will develop confidence in

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**Question:**
I have a teenage daughter and I don't think she loves herself. I need help in dealing with the issues that come up at times. --Judian

**Answer:**
Dear Judian,

Most teenagers don't love themselves. They compare themselves to the perfectly-made-up teen idols they see on the media, or the most popular kid in their class, and - of course - come up wanting.

Young teens look at themselves in the mirror and don't recognize this person. They feel awkward and desperately yearn for affirmation from their peers, who also feel awkward and want affirmation so have nothing to give.

But there's hope. As a parent you can help your daughter through these difficult times. In fact, your help can be the best help. Your daughter may not say so, but affirmation by you is very important to her. Even on those times when she acts like she's rejecting what you say or do, she's hearing you. She wants to be sure you really mean what you say.

Be God's messenger of love to your daughter.

Here are seven specific things you can do EVERY DAY:

1. Say, "I love you." Say it in different ways - a quick hug with a whispered "I love you", a note on her pillow, Read more...

2. Touch her. She may give the impression she doesn't want to be touched, but in her heart she does. Even if she screws up her face and gives the impression, Read more...

3. Affirm her. Say something good about her every day. Be on the lookout for little and big things you can mention. Read more...

4. "Tune in" and listen to your teen. Are you thinking, "How can I listen when she never talks to me?" Read more...

5. Eat with your teen every day. Eating together is a great love builder, provided the TV is turned off, Read more...
4. Find the balance between overprotecting and under protecting your child. Overprotection often results in children being unable to think or act by themselves. Under protection can leave them vulnerable to finding acceptance with peer groups that could be harmful.

5. Don't label your child. Labels often turn into self-fulfilling prophecies. Growing up being known as “the clever one” or “the loud one” or “the moody one” can impact their self-respect adversely.

6. Invite their friends home. This will give you a chance to see who they are hanging out with at school and will help monitor behavior among their friends. As children enter their teen years, peers provide an increasingly important influence. Making your home a safe, inviting place will provide a positive influence that can offer long lasting consequences for good.

7. Keep tabs on how your child is doing at school. Academic performance is a large part of the school years, but it is only part of the whole experience. Is your child interacting well socially? What messages are they receiving from classmates and teachers? If you know what is going on at school, you will know when, and if, it becomes necessary to give your child an extra boost of love and affirmation.

New Online Poll
To be successful as a parent, you don’t have to be perfect, nor do your children have to be.

Parenting success is measured by three factors:

1. How much you enjoy the job.
2. How rewarding your relationship is with your children.
3. How effective your leadership is in teaching your children to be self-disciplined and inspiring the very best in them.

Parents want the best for their children. You want them to love Jesus, to be thoughtful and kind to others, to be willing to tackle difficult tasks, to achieve, to do their best, to be cheerful givers, to feel good about themselves, and to have friends and meaningful relationships.

But just because your children may be struggling in some of these areas, it doesn't mean that you are an ineffective parent. Everyone, at times, has problems. Your children will too. Successful parents find solutions. Successful parents don't get discouraged by occasional upsets. They keep working toward the ultimate goal of growing healthy, happy children to maturity.

Beginning in the next issue of Adventist Parenting, a new column will look at ways you can incorporate successful parenting strategies in order to bring out the best in your children.

Take a moment to respond to the poll below - and we'll include the results in the next Adventist Parenting.

1. I feel optimistic and willing to learn. I enjoy the challenge of meeting my children's needs.
2. I feel kids are OK, but there's more to life than parenting.
3. I feel discouraged when I try so hard and my children don't respond as I want them to.
4. I sometimes feel like a failure and wish I'd never had children.
5. At times I've felt like all of the above.

From Parenting Boot Camp, by Dr. Kay Kuzma.
Ages and Stages

0 - 5

One of the first tasks of a baby is to become self-sufficient: to learn how to entertain himself, fall asleep unaided, and solve simple physical problems such as how to get from here to there. Next comes the task of learning how to take care of personal needs, such as body functions, dressing, playing, and making friends.

Some parents hover so closely that they overprotect their children from natural consequences that would be wonderful learning opportunities. In doing so, they sabotage their children’s growth in self-confidence. The message these parents transmit to their children is, “You’re not capable of taking care of yourself,” which results in their children developing feelings of inferiority and inadequacy.

When babies begin to explore their world, it is natural for parents to become a bit apprehensive. Their tendency is to rush to their baby’s first cry and try to protect them from anything that might hurt them. This is all good, but there must be a balance. Babies need protection, but they also need opportunities to learn how to cope with their world. For as their coping skills develop, so does their self-confidence.

Don’t take the extreme of just ignoring your child. Be very much involved. Be aware of a situation that might be about to occur. Pause just a second to see how your child is going to handle it before responding, but if there is potential danger run to his aid! Sometimes parents can’t get there fast enough to prevent things from happening. If it’s a minor upset, the child may give a startled cry, but if there is not undue attention given to the mishap, the child works through the difficulty and moves on. Each time he does so, his self-confidence is reinforced.

When parents are so overly anxious about their child’s welfare that they intervene at every little tumble, they teach their babies to whimper for help rather than find the resources within to overcome the obstacles that will result in positive feelings of accomplishment. Babies who have hovering parents learn to whimper rather than even try to take care of themselves. When your baby whimpers, and you’re confident she can solve the problem, encourage her with kind words, show her the first step, and when she’s successful with that, applaud her efforts and encourage the next step with, “You can do it! Try again. Good for you.” And when success is achieved, clap and announce to the world, “She did it. Yea!”

Once babies discover that whimpering will not bring them help, they will look for more adequate solutions and learn to take care of themselves. The result is that they will suffer less through the growing years and will be happier. The sooner children learn to rely on their own strength and abilities, the deeper their sense of security and the healthier their self-concepts.

From The First 7 Years by Kay Kuzma, Ed.D.
Ages and Stages

6 - 9

Self-confidence is what helps a child attempt new and innovative tasks. But the path to success is often littered with multiple attempts that haven't worked out. How your child responds to mistakes or failure will determine whether or not he gives up or goes on when faced with challenges. That is why it is important to teach your child that just because something didn't succeed, it doesn't mean that he or she is a failure.

Too many children take failure personally and feel worthless. Praise children for trying, even if they don't reach a certain standard of excellence. It is important to teach your children to try hard and give it their best shot. The important thing is that they feel good about themselves, because they are learning and their skills are improving.

In fact, it is healthy if parents occasionally take advantage of opportunities where they allow their children to fail in a controlled environment, if they see it as an opportunity for learning a valuable lesson. Use it as a teachable moment. For example, your child missed a party because she failed to get her room clean or he failed to get the toy he wanted because he spent his money on candy. Not only do children learn responsibility through these times of failure, but little failures can teach children how to cope with bigger ones they are likely to experience in the future. Children need to learn that failing is not the end of the world. Failure teaches valuable lessons that can be used as stepping stones to future success.

It is important to separate the value of your child from the outcome of his attempted tasks. Separate the doer from the deed. Be careful not to discourage or humiliate your child. Remember, all people make mistakes. Accept it. Remind your child that she is not working for perfection but improvement. Reward each little step. And emphasize the fact that although mistakes are made, what’s really important is how your child reacts to the mistake. Will the child be crushed? Or will the child have enough self-confidence to pick himself up and try again?

From The First 7 Years by Kay Kuzma, Ed.D.
Ages and Stages

10 - 14

Be sure your children hear in your words and see in your actions that they are special. Affirm them for who they are, rather than harping on what they should be. Get the message across that they are loved supremely, no matter what.

Children need lessons in coping with words and acts that destroy self-esteem...and you will need to give them tools to cope. Attitude is the key. If the words of criticism are true, encourage your children to receive with a thankful heart because the words can help them become better people. If the words are not true, then tell them not to let the words stick. A good word picture is, “Let those words roll off you like water off a duck’s back!”

Parents need to help their children see themselves in a positive light regardless of circumstances. You do this through positive affirmations and justified praise based on the child’s history or past performance. There comes in every child’s life, times when he or she doubts his or her value. They make a mistake, or they struggle but can’t accomplish what they want to do, or they intend to do something helpful but end up making a mess. At these times some children lose hope. From one mistake, they make a global generalization about their worth: they’re no good and can’t do anything right! They may throw in the towel, so to speak, and give up. Others become frustrated, slam the door, fling themselves onto their beds, and pound their pillows. Children with high expectations for themselves, and children who like to do things perfectly, are especially vulnerable to bouts of self-doubt.

So when you see your kids demonstrating these mannerisms, it’s time for a self-esteem rescue mission. Put some extra effort into helping them overcome self-doubt. Don’t immediately contradict the child’s declaration of failure. To do so may add to their grief. You defuse these negative “giants” by listening to the frustration and feelings of failure they have experienced.

Once these negative feelings are defused, your child is ready for some positive affirmations. In order for them to be believable, however, you have to attach them to situations that the child remembers. It won’t be enough to simply say, “You’re creative”; “You’re an efficient worker”; “You’re responsible”; “You’re a good decision-maker.”

Ultimately, you want your children to accept these positive affirmations about themselves. If the affirmations are attached to facts, they can’t be disputed. Over time, when repeated frequently enough, children will accept them as an important part of their self-concept. Then instead of losing it when mistakes are made, positive affirmations become a valuable resource to confirm that regardless of circumstances, they are valuable. Children can learn to say to themselves, “I’m OK.” “I am clever enough to figure out what to do.” “If I try hard enough, something is bound to work.”

Dr. Kay Kuzma, Ed. D., Building Your Child’s Self-esteem.
Ages and Stages

15 - 18

There are some important things you can do to build your teen’s self-respect.

Play and work together at least once a week. Enjoy each other. Have fun together. Share jokes. Share a mutual hobby. Exercise together. Share a picnic at the beach or the park. Cook together.

Prepare your teen for maturity. Competence builds self-respect. Together make a list of the skills and character traits she will need to live independently (basic cooking and good choices of food, washing and mending clothes, managing finances, driving skills and taking care of a car, responsibility, honesty, scheduling her day, etc.)

Break down each of the major areas into specific skills. Decide which skills she wants to work on this year. You have veto power if necessary – learning to drive but she is underage. Post the list and check off each skill learned. Gradually let go as you see her maturing. The more skills and character traits she checks off, the more her self-respect will grow.

Be God’s messenger of love to your teen. Respect the person your teen is becoming. In time, you will gradually notice a growth in her self-respect and her love for herself and other people.

By Dr. Donna J. Habenicht
Dear Judian,

Most teenagers don’t love themselves. They compare themselves to the perfectly-made-up teen idols they see on the media or the most popular kids in their class, and, of course, come up wanting. Young teens look at themselves in the mirror and don’t recognize this person. They feel awkward and desperately yearn for affirmation from their peers, who also feel awkward and want affirmation so have nothing to give.

But there’s hope. As a parent you can help your daughter through these difficult times. In fact, your help can be the best help. Your daughter may not say so, but affirmation by you is very important to her. Even on those times when she acts like she’s rejecting what you say or do, she’s hearing you. She wants to be sure you really mean what you say.

Be God’s messenger of love to your daughter.

Here are some specific things you can do EVERY DAY:

1. **Say, “I love you.”** Say it in different ways - a quick hug with a whispered “I love you”, a note on her pillow, a special card sent in the mail, her favorite dessert with “I love you” in the frosting, help with a difficult project, cheering her team at games. The list is endless. Be sure to use her love language. That will convey your love more than anything else.

2. **Touch her.** She may give the impression she doesn’t want to be touched, but in her heart she does. Notice how teens hang all over each other. Physical touch is an important builder of self-love. Even if she screws up her face and gives the impression she doesn’t like to be touched, she does want to be touched. Make it brief, gentle and loving. And don’t ask why she makes that funny face. Just convey your love through touch.

3. **Affirm her.** Say something good about her every day. Be on the lookout for little and big things you can mention. On the days when she is especially onery and you can’t think of one good thing, pray. God will give you ideas. These affirmations are real self-love and self-respect builders.

4. **“Tune in” and listen to your teen.** Are you thinking, “How can I listen when she never talks to me”? When she comes in from school, observe her body language and her mood. Guess how she feels and make an appropriate statement: “You must have had a tough day.” If she just grunts and makes a face, be quiet. She might say something now or later if she feels you are really listening. When she says something, give her your total, undivided attention. Stop
what you’re doing, look her direction and listen. Your undivided attention conveys an
important message: You and your ideas are important to me. Don’t rush in with a solution.
Instead, help her think through the situation. Building the ability to solve problems is a great
self-affirmer.

5. Eat with your teen every day. Eating together is a great love builder, provided the TV is
turned off so the family can share their day. Teens who eat a main meal with their family at
least five days a week, make better grades, feel better about themselves, get along better with
their teachers, their peers, and their family, and are less likely to be involved in negative
activities. It takes effort and commitment, but it pays big dividends.

6. Pray with your teen every day. Pray with the whole family every day. Prayer and God’s
Word are love builders because God is love. He will send the Holy Spirit to be with your
daughter every moment of the day. Nothing can equal God’s presence in her life.

7. Respect the person your teen is becoming. She is probably not a replica of you. Within
reason, respect how she wants to comb her hair and her style of clothes. Respect her innate
abilities. Support her decisions, but rescue if needed.

There are other important things you can do to build her self-respect that might not be part of
everyday interaction with your teen.

1. Play and work together at least once a week. Enjoy each other. Have fun together. Share
jokes. Share a mutual hobby. Exercise together. Share a picnic at the beach or the park. Cook
together.

Together make a list of the skills and character traits she will need to live independently (basic
cooking and good choices of food, washing and mending clothes, managing finances, driving
skills and taking care of a car, responsibility, honesty, scheduling her day, etc.). Break down
each of the major areas into specific skills. Decide which skills she wants to work on this year
(you have veto power if necessary - learning to drive but she is underage). Post the list and
check off each skill learned. Gradually let go as you see her maturing. The more skills and
character traits she checks off, the more her self-respect will grow.

Be God’s messenger of love to your daughter. In time, you will gradually notice a big
difference in her self-respect and her love for herself and other people.
If you don’t see any improvement and your daughter seems seriously depressed, please find a Christian counselor to help both of you. This short response to your letter won’t substitute for a nearby counselor you can consult regularly about serious issues.

I will be praying for you that you will be God’s messenger of love to your daughter and that she will respond to your love.

Dr. Donna J. Habenicht