Excellence Grounded in Faith

Dear ASCA Families,

In the month of April our Social-Emotional lesson will be on Self-Esteem. The Merriam Webster Dictionary defines self-esteem as “a confidence and satisfaction in oneself: self-respect; an exaggerated opinion of one’s own abilities: self-conceit.” The American Psychological Association defines self-esteem as “the degree to which students feel satisfied with themselves and feel valuable and worthy of respect.”

Self-esteem refers to a person’s overall sense of his or her value or work and is how we value and perceive ourselves. We might also think of this as self-confidence. It's based on our opinions and beliefs about ourselves, which can feel difficult to change. It is important to note that self-esteem is not fixed and we can improve it.

The virtue for April is Obedience, and when you think about obedience you might think about obedience to God, your parents, or even following the rules. We want to obey God and follow the Great Commandments which tells us first to love God and second to love our neighbor as we love ourselves. When we think about self-esteem this aligns with how we view ourselves, what we think about ourselves and how we love ourselves. In order to love God we need to love ourselves, who God made. We are His creation and He dwells in us.

Factors that contribute to our self-esteem:
Various factors are believed to influence our self-esteem and include:

-Genetics
-Personality
-Life Experiences
-Age
-Health
-Thoughts
-Social Circumstances
-The reactions of others
-Comparing the self to others

And for students this includes:

-Childhood
-Peer Group
-Parenting
-Social Media
-Teacher’s Attitude

Self-Esteem can affect whether you:

-Like and value yourself as a person
-Recognize your strengths
-Show kindness towards yourself
-Move past mistakes without blaming yourself unfairly
-Believe you matter and are good enough
-Believe you deserve happiness
-Can make decisions and assert yourself
-Feel able to try new or difficult things
-Take the time you need for yourself

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How Does Self-Esteem Develop

Self-esteem can start to develop when a baby gets positive attention and loving care. It begins when a child feels safe, loved, cared for, and accepted. As babies become toddlers and young children, they are able to do some things by themselves. They feel good about when they can use their new skills. Their self-esteem grows when parents pay attention to them, let them try, give smiles and show pride. As kids get older, self-esteem begins to develop any time they try things, do things and learn things. When kids have high self-esteem they feel confident, capable and accepted for who they are.

This may happen when kids:
-Make progress towards a goal
-Make friends and get along
-Help, give, or be kind
-Feel understood and accepted
-Learn things at school and get good grades
-Do favorite activities, like music, sports, art, etc.
-Try hard at something and get praised

Why Self-Esteem Matters

Kids who feel good about themselves and have positive self-esteem have the confidence and feel capable of trying their best at new things or things that might be hard. They value themselves and their abilities and feel proud of what they can do. When kids are confident about who they are, they are more likely to have a Growth Mindset (SEL lesson in December/January). This means they can motivate themselves to take on new challenges and cope when they make a mistake, feel encouraged to try again and learn from their mistakes. They're also more likely to stand up for themselves and ask for help when they need it. When kids have high self-esteem they do better in school, at home, in their activities, and with family and friends.

When kids do well at something, it also pleases other people like their parents or adults who care about them, their friends and teachers. That feedback also makes them feel good and over time helps them continue to build and have a positive self-esteem.

When kids have positive self-esteem they:
-Feel respected
-Are resilient and feel proud even when they make a mistake
-Have a sense of control over activities and events in their life
-Act independently
-Take responsibility for their actions
-Are comfortable and secure in forming relationships
-Have courage to make good decisions, even in the face of peer pressure

The Toll of Negative Self-Esteem on Kids

Many kids have trouble building and maintaining positive self-esteem for many reasons. One common reason is when kids struggle in school. Kids with low self-esteem feel unsure of themselves and their abilities. They may not feel motivated to try new things or things that are hard

for them and have a tough time dealing with mistakes. Deep down they may not believe they are good enough. Kids with low self-esteem may think others won't accept them, they may not try or join in. They may let others treat them poorly and have a hard time standing up to others and for themselves. They may give up easily and not try at all. Kids with low self-esteem find it hard to cope when they make a mistake, lose or fail therefore, they may not do as well as they could.

Kids Who have Negative Self-Esteem May Also:

-Feel frustrated, angry, anxious, or sad
-Have a hard time making and keeping friends
-Become withdrawn or give in to peer pressure
-Lose interest in learning
-More likely to be teased or bullied
-Develop self-defeating ways to deal with challenges, like quitting, avoidance, silliness, and denial

How Can We help Children to Build a Positive Self-Esteem

Kids can learn how to build a positive self-esteem and improve how they see themselves. When we are supportive but realistic is important. We can help boost a child's self-esteem by being a good role model, helping kids learn to do stuff so they can feel proud and praise effort (and let go of harsh criticism). Praise kids in ways that teach them to be proud of their efforts and accomplishments but be careful not to praise everything they do. Kids know when they have worked hard and have been successful and when they have not. Friendship is also a big component of kids building a positive self-esteem too. Just having one friend who accepts them for who they are can make all the difference. When we help our kids to build their self-esteem we are letting them know how valued and important they are.

Books for Kids - Self-Esteem:
https://www.thehighlysensitivechild.com/10-books-that-build-self-esteem-in-kids/

https://www.counselorchelsey.com/blog/selfesteembooks

https://childrenslibrarylady.com/books-self-esteem/

Resources for Parents:

How to Give Praise that Builds Kids' Self-Esteem
https://www.understood.org/en/articles/how-to-give-praise-that-builds-your-childs-self-esteem

Help Discover your Kid's Strengths
https://www.understood.org/en/articles/types-of-strengths-in-kids

How to Help Kids Overcome Fear of Failure in School
https://www.understood.org/en/articles/competence-anchors-my-advice-for-kids-who-are-stressed-about-school