

# Specific Strategies for Building Self-Esteem

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In their book *The Blessing*, authors Gary Smalley and John T. Trent outline five specific strategies for giving youngsters the blessing of high self-esteem:

- Meaningful touch
- A spoken message
- Attaching high value
- Picturing a special future
- An active commitment

**Meaningful touch** is one of the best ways to communicate warmth, personal acceptance and affirmation and to stimulate physical health. Children need regular doses of hugs, kisses, high fives, back rubs and held hands—all of which constitute meaningful touch.

**A spoken message** or words of love and acceptance are essential to communicating the blessing. Praising children with specific words of affirmation helps build their self-esteem. Remember that you can never praise your child too much. Also remember this good rule of thumb: praise your child in public and discipline your child in private.

**Attaching high value** to the one being blessed means to appreciate someone and to attach great importance to

him or her. Using words like “precious,” “awesome” and “incredible” will help demonstrate that you value your child as a person. High value is also communicated by using word pictures (for example: “Our family would not be the same without you. We would be like a puzzle missing an important piece that can’t be replaced. We need you!”).

**Picturing a special future** for the one being blessed is another

powerful ingredient to giving the blessing of high self-esteem. You could say, for example, “Based on the way you show concern for others, I can picture you being in a people-helping profession like a teacher, counselor or doctor.” Be careful, however, not to pressure your child into selecting a specific career path just because you want it for him or her.

**An active commitment** to fulfill the blessing simply means backing up all of the above with our time and resources. If you say to a child that he or she has the talent to be an excellent pianist but do not provide a piano or piano lessons, then your words mean very little. If you say that you like the way your child is trying to play soccer but fail to attend his or her soccer games, your words have little impact. You must take an active role in helping build your children’s self-esteem.

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## A Challenge to You

1. Read the book *The Blessing* (New York: Pocket Books, 1990) by Gary Smalley and John T. Trent, Ph.D.
2. Which of the five parts of giving your children this blessing come naturally to you? Which parts do you need to work on? Write down what you plan to do and share it with your spouse or a friend.