



Confidence Summary

Why Confidence?

Confidence simply means belief in self. But where does that belief come from? It begins with a trusting relationship you work to cultivate with your teen. That bond you have with your teen forms a solid foundation from which a teen can explore the world.

Step 1. Get Your Teen Thinking by Getting Their **Input**

- Start exploring the challenges to your teen's sense of confidence (sports, school, making friends, keeping friends?) by building from success and strengths!
- Consider together what your teen is working on at school.
 - *"Remember last year when you had to write your first research paper? How did you feel at the start? In the middle? How did you feel when you finished and the teacher liked it?"*
 - *"What helped you get through that learning challenge?"*
- What if your teen is feeling insecure in making or keeping friends? Ask key questions first about that specific issue to really understand what's challenging for your teen.
 - *"How can you start up a conversation with a classmate?"*
 - *"What does a good friend say and do?"*
 - *"How can you act in ways that will be a good friend to others?"*

Step 2. **Teach** New Skills by Interactive Modeling

- Cultivate a learning mindset. For example, when your teen says *"I can't do it!"* respond with:
 - *"You can learn anything with time, practice, and hard work."*
 - *"You can meet or overcome any challenge with time, practice, and hard work."*
 - *"Remember that time you did do it even when you thought you couldn't."*

Or, for example, if your teen says *"no one likes me!"* you can respond with:

- *"You know how to be a good friend (share specific examples). Your classmates will want to be friends with you because of the ways you are a good friend."*

Or, for example, if your teen says *"You hate me!"* or *"You don't care!"* you can respond:

- *"I always love you, I always care no matter what. Sometimes your choices upset me, but my love never changes."*

- Homework is a primary time when teens struggle with meeting their academic challenges and may melt down in frustration. Set expectations ahead of time that they will make mistakes. It's a normal part of the learning process.
- Teach the essential brain break. When frustrated, walk away, get fresh air, get a drink of water, take a moment before returning.
- Teach your teen about self-talk.
 - Use reflective listening for the unspoken message such as, *"I can see that you are telling yourself you're just not good at this. Unfortunately, telling yourself you can't do it can hurt your chance of meeting your goal. How can we turn that message around to help you?"*

Trap Don't fix your teen's mistakes. If you spot errors on their homework, unless your teen invites your support and input, leave it and allow your teen to learn from those mistakes.

Step 3. **Practice** to Grow Skills, Confidence, and Develop Habits

- Allow your teen the chance to take steps to meet their big challenges, taking responsibility for their own tasks or relationships - even when you know you could do it faster and better.
- Be sure and consider how you can create the conditions to support their success (like creating a quiet, organized environment with school tools at the ready in which they can complete their homework).
- Initially, practice may require more teaching but avoid taking over and doing it for your teen.

Step 4. **Support** Your Child's Development and Success

- Initially, your teen may need active support. Use, "I'd love to see..." statements and ask them to demonstrate how they can work hard toward a goal: *"I'd love to see how you speak constructively with your teacher about your concerns."*
- Recognize effort by using "I notice..." statements like: *"I notice how you took a brain break and then, got back to your homework - that's smart!"*
- In a gentle, non-public way, you can whisper in their ear, *"Remember how you introduced yourself last week to a new friend? How can you use that experience here?"*
- Actively reflect on how your teen is feeling when approaching challenges: *"How are you feeling about your free time at school?"* or *"Seems like you got frustrated with your homework and just stopped. Did your teacher mention that your homework was incomplete?"*

Trap Don't move on or nag. Teens often need more time to stick with a challenge or pursue a goal they aren't certain they can reach. Be sure to wait long enough for your teen to show you they are competent. Your waiting could make all the difference in whether they are able to do what you need them to do.

Step 5. **Recognize** Effort and Quality to Foster Motivation

- Recognize and call out when it is going well: *"I notice you completed your homework today on your own in the time we agreed upon. Yes! Excellent."*
- Recognize small steps along the way. Find small ways your teen is making an effort and let them know you see them.
- Build celebrations into your routine. Include hugs, high fives, and fist bumps in your repertoire of ways to appreciate one another.

Trap Avoid gifts or other physical rewards for performance. These actually have a de-motivating effect on teens. When you remove the money, for example, have they internalized the skills and also the sense of responsibility for performing them? There's less of a chance if you've offered a "bribe." Focus on your attention as the best reward.

Tip Be specific. "Good job" seems to not carry much meaning. However, a specific compliment about a pointed behavior - *"You put your game away when you were finished - love seeing that!"* - can promote more of the same.

Trap If you focus only on outcomes - *"You got your homework finished"* - you miss the chance to influence the process. Better to say, *"You got home on time, took a brain break, and returned with focus to finish your work."*

Celebrate yourself for making it your parenting priority to work on cultivating the social and emotional skills that are most critical for your teen's success today and in their future!

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