



Confidence Summary

Why Confidence?

Whether it's your one-year-old crying when you leave their sight or your own feelings of inadequacy when trying to respond to your child's frustration, establishing regular ways to build a trusting connection along with teaching your child vital skills will build confidence.

Step 1. Getting to Know and Understand Your Child's Input

- Consider how your child reacts when they are upset, angry, or frustrated.
 - How do they show you? Children at this age may cry, yell, hit, bite, or throw things. They can still be soothed by cuddling and rocking and are learning to self-soothe when upset.
 - If a child is crying, offer to hold them or provide comfort items like a favorite teddy bear or a blanket. Do not attempt to talk anything through when a child is highly upset. Focus on calming down first.
 - If a child hits or bites in anger or frustration, stop and say, *"Ouch. That hurts my arm, and it makes me feel sad"* or *"I see you are frustrated."*
- Consider how your child reacts when they are happy or excited.
 - How do they show you? Children at this age clap their hands, imitate others, smile, squeal, and laugh when they are happy or excited.
- Consider how your child reacts when they are scared.
 - How do they show you? Children at this age are more aware of their surroundings, which can make them afraid of new things or sounds. They may cry, withdraw, or hide.
- Each time your child expresses any big feeling, be sure and name the feeling. *"You seem angry"* or *"You seem happy."* This builds their feelings vocabulary adding to their self-awareness and ability to manage their feelings.

As you react to your child in ways that soothe, you will find they will feel a greater sense of your understanding and responsiveness so that your interactions become more two-way instead of one-way.

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

- Read and pretend play together.
 - During reading time, select a book with faces to help your child learn to identify the different feelings. Point out how you can tell what each face is feeling, and practice recreating those cues with your child.
 - After reading a story together, act out the story and use feeling words and expressions to match how the characters were feeling throughout the story. This expands their feelings vocabulary and teaches them how to recognize a wide range of perspectives and feelings that they might not encounter in day-to-day interactions with others.
- Narrate your daily routines. As you prepare breakfast at home or go shopping together at the store, talk about what you are doing each step of the way. Involve your child by asking questions. For example, *"I am getting out your favorite cereal bowl. I think we'll have some cereal this morning. Does that sound yummy to you?"*
- Narrate your feelings. As you are going through your bedtime routine, talk about what you are doing each step of the way. Involve your child by asking questions. For example, you might say, *"I just yawned and am feeling sleepy. Do you think I should take a nap?"*

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

- Allow your child the chance to take steps to meet their big challenges, whether they are working on tasting new foods for the first time, exploring the objects in their environment, or attempting to communicate with new words or phrases.
- Create opportunities for simple ways that your child can help with grown-up tasks to build their sense of confidence. They may not be able to complete the tasks independently, and sometimes you will have to go slower to allow them to participate. But, their participation is an important chance for them to practice and grow confidence. Examples include simple things like walking beside you as you carry out the trash, helping to set the table by carrying the napkins, or helping to match socks in the laundry.
- Recognize effort by using "I notice..." statements like, *"I noticed how you helped get your shirt on by putting your arms up."*
- Consider how you can create the conditions to support their success like creating a quiet, organized environment with age-appropriate board books, toys, or creative supplies.
- Initially, practice may require more teaching, but avoid taking over and doing it for your child.

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

- Use *"Show me..."* statements and ask them to demonstrate how they can work hard toward a goal. When a child learns a new skill, they are eager to show it off! *"Show me how you can put your blocks into the box. This is part of our clean up routine."* Offer support so your child can be successful.
- Don't move on quickly if your child shows interest in trying something new. Children often need more time to stick with a challenge or pursue a goal. Be sure to wait long enough for your child to show you they are competent. Your waiting could make all the difference in whether they are able to gain skills over time.
- Recognize effort by using *"I notice..."* statements like: *"I noticed how you were able to take your socks off before your bath."*

- On days with extra challenges when you can see your child is scared of new people or situations, offer confidence in your child's ability to face the unfamiliar. In a gentle, non-public way, you can whisper in your child's ear, *"This is my friend Anna. I am excited for you to meet her."*
- Actively reflect on how your child is feeling when approaching challenges. You could offer comfort items to help your child face new challenges. *"Would your blanket help you feel better?"*
- Actively reflect on how your child is feeling when approaching challenges. You can offer reflections like:
 - *"You seem worried about going into this new store. I'll hold you so you feel more confident."* Offering comfort when facing new situations can help your child gain a sense of security and face them rather than backing away.
 - You can also offer comfort items to help your child face new challenges. *"Would your bear help you feel better?"*
- Take steps to support your child if they experience separation anxiety. Be certain you are placing your child in the care of someone you trust so that you feel safe leaving your child in that person's care. Give your child a piece of you (blanket, scarf) to have while you're gone. Express your love and explain to them when you'll return in terms of activities: *"You'll finish lunch, and then I'll be back!"* Leave without lingering but don't sneak out.

Tip Separation anxiety, though developmentally normal, can be stressful for both parent and child. Take deep breaths and time to calm down after leaving your child in caring hands.

Step 5. Recognize and Celebrate

- You can recognize and celebrate your child with the following actions.
 - Smile at your child.
 - Make eye contact.
 - Use caring facial expressions.
 - Be physically gentle and caring with your child.
 - Recognize and call out when all is going well. It may seem obvious, but it's easy not to notice when all is moving along smoothly. If your child cried when you had to leave the playground yesterday but seems perfectly content today, notice their newfound comfort. *"I notice you are OK as we leave the playground today. That is so helpful!"*
 - Build celebrations into your everyday routines. Promote joy and happiness by laughing, singing, dancing, hugging, and snuggling to appreciate one another.

Tip This year is filled with amazing changes -- and not just for your child. Don't forget to recognize and celebrate your own development and milestones as a parent.

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