

Self-Esteem and Sportsmanship

By Susan D. Artof

Parents may help to develop the value of sportsmanship in their children by increasing both a child's self-esteem and moral behavior. Here are some reminders in a list I adapted from the *National PTA and March of Dunes Point Parenting The Undeveloped Skill Project* several years ago. In lecturing and talking to parents about these reminders, I am always surprised by how many parents just forget that their children are indeed just children.

Eleven Steps to Better Self-Esteem

1. Show respect to your child and allow for individual action within a given limitation.
2. Define and enforce limits and rules and communicate the family value system clearly. Let the child know what is expected of them.
3. Reward each child when possible - verbally as well as with action. Praise, recognition, or special privileges are often good rewards for a good job.
4. Take your child's ideas seriously. Listen to them. They make sense more often than you might think. Don't put the child down just because their ideas seem different from yours. Discuss where they developed their beliefs and why you can't agree with them. Often, what you may hear gives you clues to their fears and concerns.
5. Have reasonable expectations about what they can or cannot do. Understand that there are age differences in development, and punishment should be age appropriate.
6. Help your child to develop tolerance for their own actions and those of others. Help them to understand and accept differences in people and help them appreciate strengths in others, as well as themselves.
7. Remind them just how special they are - even if they do not win!
8. Be available to them, even if they choose not to take advantage of all the time. Being there is still important to them.
9. Tell them you love them irrespective of their performance.
10. Give them increasingly more responsibility, appropriate to their age.
11. Let them fail in order to let them win.