

Discipline helps in building self esteem
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There are many wonderful things about being a parent, watching your child take their first step and speak their first word, then remembering those moments while attending your child's first play. While raising a child is filled with many happy moments, parenthood also brings some not-so-cheerful responsibilities - discipline being one of them.

Many parents find discipline to be a difficult task, but it is essential in order to raise socially acceptable children. Effective discipline that is appropriate to your child's age and development can actually help in building your child's self-esteem!

First, it is important to differentiate between discipline and punishment. Punishment is something that parents impose on children, like spanking, lecturing, or grounding. Discipline, on the other hand, is very similar to coaching and involves teaching your child self-control and confidence. Disciplined children understand right from wrong, how to respect the rights of others and which behaviors are acceptable and which are not.

With this in mind, how do you find the balance between expressing your love, supporting your child's developing skills, and expecting acceptable behavior?

Most importantly, make it clear that you love your child unconditionally. Use words and hugs and spend time in mutually enjoyable activities on a daily basis. The most important thing you can give your child is your acceptance, time and attention.

While providing these things is valuable, it is also important to be specific on what behaviors are and are not acceptable. Make it clear that certain actions have consequences and follow through with the consequences! It is sometimes easier to ignore or overlook a behavior than it is to correct it, but in the long run, **not** correcting behaviors will do more harm than good.

It is also very important that you guide your children toward appropriate behavior without making any task an issue of love. When your child needs discipline, try not to give the impression that you no longer love them as a result of their actions. You may be very excited when your child receives all "A's" on his or her report card but if they came home with all "C's," you would not love them any less. Make sure they understand that fact.

We all know that raising a child is not easy; there are no warranties or instruction manuals. By using a little patience and self-control yourself, you will instill those skills in your children as well.

For more information about the 4-H program or other youth development issues, contact the Oconee County Cooperative Extension Office at (706) 769-3946 or stop by our office located behind the Oconee County Courthouse.