



## Encouraging Growth: How Praise Builds Self-Esteem in Children

The way we interact with children plays a big role in shaping how they see themselves and the world. One powerful tool we can use is praise. The kind of praise that helps children develop self-worth and inner confidence. When used intentionally, praise becomes more than just positive words—it becomes a way to support emotional growth and self-esteem.

### What is Effective Praise?

Effective praise is focused on effort or action, rather than traits. For example, instead of, “You’re so smart,” you might say, “I’m proud of how you kept trying to build your tower, even when it fell.” This type of praise helps a child understand what they did well and encourages them to repeat those behaviors. It promotes self-awareness, perseverance and confidence in their ability to learn and improve.

### The Role of Growth Mindset

A growth mindset is the belief that effort and learning can lead to improvement and success. When children hear praise that focuses on their actions and strategies, they’re more likely to believe that hard work leads to results. In contrast, vague or generic praise like “Good job” or “You’re so smart” may reinforce a fixed mindset, where children believe their abilities are unchangeable. Over time, this can make them hesitant to take risks or face challenges.

### Small Changes, Big Impact

Building a child’s self-esteem doesn’t require grand gestures—just a thoughtful shift in how we acknowledge their efforts. Celebrate differences, encourage open communication and express appreciation often. When you praise their persistence, creativity or kindness with clear examples, you’re reinforcing their self-worth and emotional development. These small but intentional moments can have a lasting effect on how children view themselves.

### Helping Children See Their Strength

The praise you offer today helps shape the confidence they carry tomorrow. When children receive praise that clearly reflects their actions and efforts, they’re more likely to believe in their ability to grow and succeed. By fostering a growth mindset and focusing on meaningful feedback, you can support their self-esteem in a way that lasts well beyond childhood. Even brief, thoughtful moments of encouragement can make a child feel seen, valued and capable.

**BHS provides referrals to qualified mental health professionals that can help. To speak to your designated Care Coordinator about your benefits and options for support call BHS at 800-245-1150.**