

Top Tips for Boosting Self-confidence

Everybody can suffer from a lack of self-confidence and self-esteem during times in their lives, but for some autistic people this can be a prolonged feeling that has a big impact on their daily lives and opportunities.

When we recognise and build on strengths, interests, and talents in people we begin to develop and support their confidence and self-esteem. People who are more confident are likely to cope better with certain situations, difficulties and emotions. This is why it is important as parents and carers to build on this. Some examples of ways you can do this include:

- **Creating a culture of difference not deficit:**

There can be a real negative narrative around autism which can have a negative impact. Support awareness of what they are reading and watching and give them opportunities to talk about autism and ask questions.

- **Being aware of and taking time to process your own feelings around diagnosis:**

How you view the diagnosis may have an impact on your friend or loved one. If they see that you are upset by it they may feel like they are a problem or that you're disappointed in them.

- **Being aware of the impact of language:**

When attending meetings be wary of taking your loved one, particularly if challenges are going to be the focus of the meeting. Imagine how you would feel sitting in a room with several people discussing you, and your challenges, often as though they aren't there or can't understand.

- **Validating feelings:**

By talking about it and not dismissing feelings, you can reverse low self-esteem or thwart it developing. Experiences that are meaningful should be validated and understood not brushed off or treated as insignificant.

- **Supporting and creating an outlet to explore feelings:**

Things like dance, art, drama can be useful, but remember everyone is different so don't be disappointed if they don't like these things. It's about finding what the person likes.

- **Thinking about interests and strengths - and building on these :**

We are all happier and more confident when we are doing something we are good at, that we enjoy.

- **Using praise, encouragement, and rewards:**

Everyday activities can be used as opportunities to build confidence by giving praise and rewards. However, be aware that some people can really struggle with praise and reward charts do not work for everyone.

- **Using positivity jars or books:**

These can be a really effective and an interactive way of building confidence and self-esteem. Positivity jars can be filled with things they like about themselves, as well as what others like about them. A note is picked out daily. Happiness journals and books are another good way of building confidence.

- **Talking about their differences:**

Talking about how everyone is unique in their own way, and what makes each person interesting, can help them to see themselves in a positive light too, as well as understanding their value within their community.

- **Supporting connections:**

Supporting the joining of an activity or club they might enjoy is a good chance to develop connections with others. These may be clubs or groups with other autistic people, which could help them to understand themselves better, and facilitate confidence in sharing their experiences.

