

5 Ways to Rebuild Confidence in Kids with ADHD

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Children with ADHD are often misunderstood and in trouble even though they are just “being themselves.” This experience often leads to a loss of self-confidence. Imagine a child with ADHD trying to keep his brain activated during a boring activity by wiggling around or making noises. He doesn’t mean to be disruptive, but boy does he when he gets in trouble! “That boy is trouble!”

Or imagine a girl who is so busy day dreaming to keep her brain activated that she has not heard the teacher’s instructions or that she has forgotten to turn in her assignment. “That girl is such a space cadet!” These messages may not be spoken aloud, and yet to our children they come through loud and clear. How can we as parents re-build our children’s self-confidence? How can we inoculate our children against harmful messages?

1.) **Listen to your child** - When your child expresses excitement in something - engage with that excitement. Getting a high score on Sonic Advanced Super Smash may not be terribly exciting to you, but acknowledging your child’s accomplishment will mean the world to him.

Likewise, when your child expresses upset about something, explore those feelings and help your child to feel understood. For example, if a friend is moving away and your child is feeling sad. Honor that sadness by helping your child talk about what she will miss about that friend. Don’t try to make everything better by saying something like, “Don’t worry, you will make more friends.” While this may be true, it denies your child’s feelings in the moment.

2.) **Encourage your child’s talents** - With so many challenges, it may be tempting to force our children with ADHD to work harder on the things that they struggle with all the time. But, it is just as important to help them to find something that they are passionate about. Okay so math is like pulling teeth, but maybe she loves to draw. Have lots of art supplies around and make a big deal about her amazing artwork. She may never be a great mathematician, but maybe she will be a wonderful Graphic Designer some day.

3.) **Talk about your child’s accomplishments** - Have you ever found yourself complaining about your child on the phone only to discover that he was listening? Try talking about his accomplishments right in front of him! While talking to your spouse, say, “Wow, did you notice how Tommy remembered to put his dishes in the dishwasher?” While talking on the phone to a friend, “I’m so proud of Jenny, she has been doing so well in school lately. . .” Remember they are listening, so give them something great to hear!

4.) **Praise your child specifically** - Instead of saying, “Good Job!” or “Way to go” make your praise more specific. This way your child will know exactly what it is that you appreciated about her actions. For example, say, “Wow you sure earned a lot of point on your videogame.” “I noticed that you did three math problems in the last 10 minutes—that’s pretty fast!” Put a lot of energy behind these words to make them really count with your child.

5.) **Spend time just enjoying your child** - Our lives get so busy that sometimes we forget to stop and just enjoy our children. Try to spend at least 20 minutes each day doing something fun with your child. It can be something active like a game or something quiet like reading a story together. Talk to your child about what they are interested in talking about, and just have fun together. Believe me this will pay huge benefits in building your child’s confidence and in building a strong connection together. Enjoy!