

GMCO August 2009

BOLSTERING YOUR CHILD'S SELF ESTEEM AND SELF CONFIDENCE FOR THE NEW SCHOOL YEAR!

Can you believe summer is almost over and school is about to begin? There are children dreading the start of the school year; children so excited they can't wait for school to start; and children really anxious and perhaps, even scared. As a parent it is important to begin now to bolster your child's self esteem and build their self confidence to begin the new school year.

Believe it or not, I remember my first grade teacher, Mrs. Anderson, which was more than a few years ago. She would begin every single school day with the words, "The Best is yet to be!"

She would look one of us in the eye and say "The Best book is yet to be written and it could be written by you." She would look at someone else and say, "The best song is yet to be composed and it could be composed by you!" She would look at someone else and say, "The best leader is yet to be elected and you could be the one." She would look at someone else and say, "The cure for cancer is yet to be discovered and you would be the one to make that discovery." She would then look at all of us and say "The best is yet to be! Let's make today our best day!" Can you believe I still remember that after all these years?

How can we help our children adopt that attitude, the best is yet to be, for the coming school year whether they are about to begin first grade or their senior year? Let me offer two suggestions: Help your child to 1) See it! and 2) Believe it!

The first step is to help your child to "see" the year ahead in a positive light . . . to literally "see" in their mind's eye the "best" happening. How you see the future determines how you act today. If you can manage to see the year ahead in a positive light looking forward to what is to come you will act in a positive manner today. If you see the year ahead in a negative light fearing what is to come you will act in a negative manner today. Then, both pathways become self-fulfilling prophecies.

A sports psychologist will tell an athlete that you can't out perform your self-image. The "Me" you see is the "Me" you'll be. Meaning you can't

perform better than the picture and image you have of yourself. This is why athletes will spend so much time visualizing success. Tiger Woods before he hits a golf shot will literally see the shot he intends to hit in his mind's eye before he hits it. I had the privilege to interview Michael Jordan once, perhaps the greatest basketball player EVER. Michael Jordan would arrive three hours before every game and spend the first hour in the locker room with the lights off visualizing in great detail playing his best game ever. You can't out perform your self-image.

This is a technique we can use with our children of any age. Help them to "see" themselves succeeding at school . . . help them to visualize various situations . . . whether it be taking tests, making presentations, or making new friends . . . help your child see themselves succeeding in those situations. Ask your child what that would look like and feel like. Try to help them be as vivid as possible and then just stop for a minute and encourage them to travel in the future in their imagination and experience that success.

Another great technique for parents to bolster their child's self-image is "YOU ARE" statements. Think of those attributes you want to encourage in your child like "confidence," "responsibility," "respect," "determination."

Choose one or two attributes each week and affirm this attribute whenever you see it in your child.

- "You are so strong!"
- "You are so confident."
- "You are so bright."
- "You are so responsible."
- "You are so determined."

There's a Chinese Proverb that says every child is a blank piece of paper and every interaction you have with your child leaves a mark. Help your child write a script that brings forth their very best.

So, help your child "see" the best is yet to be and then help your child "believe it." The reality is the loudest voice you ever hear is your own voice. We need to help our children make sure their inner voice helps them and doesn't hurt them.

Believe it or not, I used to stutter. I went to speech therapy for several years to try to overcome this. I still stutter a bit, especially when I'm nervous.

I remember the first day of kindergarten. We were sitting in a circle and we had to say our name. I tried to disappear but I was asked to go first. I said, "Mmmy nname is . . ." but, before I could even get my name out, a child to the right of me shouts, "He stutters!"

Another child shouts, "He's stupid!"

I started to cry and, believe it or not, I ran right out of that room and ran straight home, which fortunately was one a block away.

My mom was waiting for me because she got the call from the teacher to expect a hysterical child any second.

I said to my mom, "I stutter. I'm stupid."

It was no longer, "He stutters. He's stupid." I took their messages and internalized them and made them my own. And, I must confess, that critical inner voice had a powerful impact on me for many years until I learned to develop a different, more empowering inner voice.

The loudest voice you ever hear is your own voice.

Self-talk is a concept we can teach our children very early in life and help them understand how they talk to themselves will either build them up or tear them down. Suggest simple phrases like, "I can," "I am strong," "I am confident," and encourage your child to repeat those phrases to themselves especially if they are anxious or scared.

There's a phrase I think every parent should teach their children and have them repeat it every night before bed.

"No matter what you say or do to me, I am a child of God, loved by God, created for a purpose only I can fulfill."

The playground can be a pretty cruel place. Every day our children will get knocked down, excluded, told they are "stupid" or "no good." Imagine if they have instilled within them those words,

“No matter what you say or do to me, I am a child of God, loved by God, created for a purpose only I can fulfill.” AND NOTHING CAN TAKE THAT AWAY!

The school year is about to start . . .

The best is yet to be . . .

May your child see it and believe it!