

3 Ways to boost your kids' confidence **in class and out**

Have your children ever had trouble making friends or speaking up in class? Have they ever had issues with bullies, or even other kids picking on them, and they didn't know how to stand up for themselves? Have you ever wished you could find some magic formula that would make your child more confident?

Well, unfortunately, there is no magic formula to instantaneously make your child super self-confident, but there are things that you can do as a parent to help them get over shyness or fear. Here are a few things you can try at home that should help:

1. **Set a good example.** This may seem obvious, but you may be amazed how most children, esp. young children, emulate everything their parents (and other adults they see often) say and do. You may already be setting a good example at home, but kids need to see confidence projected in how you interact with others (after all, that's what they will need to do in school). So be mindful of what you say and do in public when they're with you. If you treat others with kindness in a confident way, and your tone of voice displays that confidence, you can be sure your kids will pick up on it.
2. **Talk to your kids about their day.** Have you ever asked your child, "How was school today?", only to get the standard answers of "Fine" or "OK"? Or even asked "What did you learn today?" only to hear "Nothing"? It may take a little extra time and effort on your part, but sitting down with them for dinner or on the couch watching T.V., and "chatting" with them about their day can be very helpful when it comes to you learning about who they are. If you get standard answers from standard questions, try asking better ones. Perhaps, "what was your favorite thing you did today?" Or getting to know their friends' names, and asking, "How's Justin or Amanda (or whatever their friends' names are)? What did you guys do today?" This works better if you start when they're younger, and as they grow you may get some resistance, but one or two questions a day in the long run will let them know you really care, and also allow you to pick up on when something might not be quite right that you can deal with early on.
3. **Practice Confidence.** Just like learning discipline or focus, or lifting weights or learning math, the more you practice properly, the stronger you get. The same is true for your kids. Take something they may already be doing (like a speech or essay for school), or create a scenario in which they may find themselves in (such as meeting someone new), come up with things to say, and practice. At first, you may have them practice for 5 minutes with a mirror just by themselves (to help alleviate pressure to perform), and later you may practice with them in a role play scenario. It may get them ready for a specific task such as an oral report or meeting someone for the first time, but most importantly, it gets them to practice talking and looking someone in the eye (even if it's themselves in the mirror). Getting them to practice speaking, first privately, and eventually publically is a life skill that can benefit them their whole lives. As Jerry Seinfeld once said, "Public speaking is a greater fear than death which means most people would rather be in the coffin than giving the Eulogy." This is one way to help give your kids that confidence edge.