

DISCIPLINE AND SELF-ESTEEM

Some parents see their child's self-esteem as a fragile egg-shell, ready to crack at the first sign of discipline. They see nurturing love as hugs, kisses, praise, cheers, giving and never saying "no." They become worn out and guilty when they cannot keep it up.

Too often, self-esteem is the subject of one book, or one chapter, and discipline is in another. A parent can easily regard them as oil and water and think they do not mix. Yet, both are needed and each is vital to the other. A child cannot have self-esteem if he/she has not been disciplined or taught. He/she will not learn the skills of living with others if he/she has had no teaching. The teaching, or discipline, works best when the child is treated with respect, at every age. Why do parents avoid the discipline that can lead to wonderful achievements?

Parents are afraid:

- * to frustrate their children;
- * to make their children unhappy;
- * their children will not love them;
- * they will damage their child's self-esteem.

Discipline, which respects the child, enhances self-esteem and grows into self-discipline. Some suggestions which will help parents through the "fear" of discipline are:

- * Keep directions clear and simple.
- * Be consistent.
- * Have as few rules as possible.
- * Do not expect all children to learn the same way with the same speed.
- * Catch your child being good. Use positive reinforcement: "Thank you for your help" and "I like shopping with you today."
- * Use "I" messages rather than "you" messages. Examples: "I can't let you hit," while removing the hitter. "I don't like food on the floor," while taking away the bowl and spoon.
Bad Examples: "You shouldn't hit." "That's not nice." "You've made a mess." They have a shaming, accusing, negative sound.
- * Make it as easy as possible for the child to succeed, to win and to learn.
- * Expect beginners to make mistakes. Remember, that includes parents.