

# RAISING CONFIDENT, COMPETENT CHILDREN

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A lot of what I was going to speak about was mentioned by Prof Wally Goddard in his wonderful talk. Much of what we do in the Triple P Program (Positive Parenting Program) is what Prof Goddard spoke about. What I'm going to do is go into some of the practical things that we can do to follow some of the advice given by Prof Goddard in some really concrete ways.

Some of you are probably already doing a lot of what you hear today, I want you to give yourselves a pat on the back and feel reassured that you are on the right track and feel confident to keep on doing those things. Perhaps others of you may have forgotten some of these things as life gets busy and our kids get bigger and hopefully these will be reminders of things you have done in the past but have perhaps dropped off the family agenda and it may act as a prompt to put them back on. And for others these will be new ideas that just haven't occurred to you in this busy world that we all live in.

A quick overview of what I'm going to cover this morning – *getting off to a good start; some of the good building blocks for success* and then some take home messages at the end.

So what does it mean – *a good start*? I think it's important to recognise that parents choose the values, skills and behaviours they want to encourage in their children - encouraging children to do the things that we know they need to do to become well adjusted and good members of society. These are things that parents decide for themselves in terms of their own family values. We know that the foundations for this are built very early in children's early years and because parents are their first teachers, they have a great opportunity to lay down these foundations in a very solid way. Children are more likely to develop confidence, reach their potential and get on well with others if they have this foundation provided. Parents can help their children develop these skills if they recognise and take the opportunities that come along which enable them to do that.

We've looked at this from lots of different ways and these are **six key building blocks** which we think are important that can be used to help children become confident and competent individuals.

**The first one – Showing Respect to Others.** Why is it important that children are respectful? They are certainly more likely to have good relationships with other people if they learn to behave respectfully ie speaking politely, using the name that the other person likes to be called by, not a nickname that is disrespectful. Children need to know how to address others in ways that are likely to engage them in a positive way. When children go to school there will be a far greater likelihood of facilitating their education if they're co-operative with the kinds of instructions and requests that they are going to be exposed to and therefore it's important that parents teach their children these skills early on. Children also need to learn the family rules, boundaries and guidelines that are put in place to help us get on with each other in positive ways. These are ways that parents can help their children to learn in those early years.

So what can we do? One of the things I'll be coming back to time and time again is the issue of parents being their children's main teachers. We know that children learn an awful lot from watching and copying what their parents do. Therefore if we as parents, want our children to behave in certain ways, the first thing we need to ask ourselves is – *Are we behaving in that way?* If we are not modelling speaking politely, being respectful, using a positive tone of voice, then it's going to be difficult to have our children do that. So thinking of our own behaviour and how our children observe, us both in the way we speak to our children and other members of the family and

in the way we speak to other people whom we come into contact with - these are all powerful models for our children. If we say to a child, speak politely when you're talking to someone and they don't see us doing that, then they are getting a very mixed message and it will be much more difficult for us to see that behaviour occurring in our children.

If we don't see it happening then we need to prompt it. We need to remind them by saying something like, "Jimmy, when you were talking to your sister just then, I really would have liked you to have spoken in a polite way and not to shout at her and not use rude names." We need to tell our children what we expect of them, if they don't follow the examples we are setting for them.

If we do see it happening, we need to acknowledge and appreciate their efforts. **Catching children being good is a very powerful tool for parents and it often goes unnoticed. We don't notice the good things that our children do, but we sure notice the things they don't do well. We sometimes need to shift that balance and look out for things that our children are doing and we want to see more of.** If our children do ask for things in rude or unpleasant ways, then we need to stand firm and not give in. If children learn to get what they want when they speak in rude and unpleasant ways, then that's something they will take away from the experience and we're more likely to see it happen again.

Co-operation is an important part of being human and living together in social community groups. Children need to be able to stop what they're doing, listen when they are being spoken to and co-operate - to follow an instruction straight away without complaining. We should think about this in terms of what our children learn and what is going to be useful to them in the future. If children learn to complain and moan, when they go out to work, when they're in situations where they are spending time with peers or social groups, then these are not behaviours that are likely to stand them well. Our children need to learn that there are times when we need to co-operate without complaining and be able to join in activities that perhaps at first glance don't always fit their needs, but which might provide opportunities that they hadn't thought about.

So how do we encourage our children to co-operate more? It's a great thing to think about but what are the practical issues of doing that? If we want our children to do something when we ask them, there are some simple things that we can do to increase the likelihood that this will happen.

The first thing is to get close. How many times do we either see or hear of a parent saying something to their child as they walk out of the door from a distance away?. They might say something like "*I want you to put those toys away before you go to bed, Peter.*" If a child is engrossed in an activity and enjoying what they are doing and you're calling this from some distance away as you go out of the room, what are they likely to hear you say? They might hear "Peter" and think, "Oh, that was me", but they don't necessarily hear what the instruction was. Then the parent comes back into the room 10 minutes later and the child is still sitting there playing. "I told you 10 minutes ago to put those things away." "No you didn't". Then you get an argument about whether they heard you or not. The simplest thing is to take that out of the equation. **Avoid the possibility of an argument occurring in the first place. Get close. Use your child's name first to get their attention, especially if you've got more than one child, they need to know that it's *them* that you're talking to. Give the instruction in a firm, clear, calm voice and then give them time to co-operate.**

Children often take longer to process requests or instructions than adults do and parents jump in sometimes just too soon; where, if they had waited 2 or 3 seconds longer, the child may have done what they were asked to do. Then you avoid getting into that conflict situation. If they do what you've asked them, then remember to express appreciation and comment that you like what it is they've done.

If they don't, you may want to repeat that instruction to give them a second alternative. But if they don't at that point, then there needs to be a consequence. Being positive is important, but if that fails, you need to have a back up consequence so that the child will learn that if they do not follow a reasonable request then consequences will follow.

**The second building block, Being Considerate**, is a closely aligned building block to being respectful. Being considerate speaks more to the issue of taking the other person's perspective, putting yourself in the other person's shoes and thinking about what it is like to be them. Therefore we need to help our children be able to do this.

This is a skill that develops over time. Some children learn this quite quickly, others are well into adolescence before they are able to do this. Some people hardly ever manage it at all. It's going to be easier if we can help them in a deliberate way from an early age. Children are going to get on better with other people if they listen, let others have a turn, if they ask for other people's opinions and views about what they might like to do, to learn to wait sometimes when others are busy and to think about how the other person might be feeling in a situation, and to help others.

One of the key things about community living is the issue of helping each other. We all need assistance at one time or other, whether it's a flat battery and you need to borrow somebody's jumper leads or whether it's some emotional support when things turn out in unexpected ways. Modelling healthy behaviour and promoting that in our children is an important way of developing communities where people help each other. This may include being friendly and welcoming to a new boy in the class or just helping out at home with chores or jobs.

What are some of the practical things we can do as parents to encourage consideration in our children? It's a bit of a vague, abstract notion. What can we do to promote that more?

Again we come back to our own behaviour as a main first step. We need to show our children what consideration looks like and we need to explain to them what it is that we're doing and why. Children won't always necessarily see what being considerate means and what it looks like.

We need to think twice before we criticize other people, whether it be what we see on television or people in the street or our neighbours. If we are constantly being critical and making negative comments about other people, we should not be surprised if our children do that as well. We should try and point out the good points in other people. Try and point out the things that balance the negative aspects of things that people might do so that children see the balance between the positive and the negative things. If we constantly dwell on the negative then again that's giving our children a message that is likely to implicate their own learning in ways that we then might say *'Why are they doing that, I don't want them to do that?'*

Provide opportunities to show caring. Invite friends around. Create situations where there are opportunities to take turns, to help out someone else, to do things for someone else. When we see that happening, make sure we acknowledge it. Make sure we show appreciation for the things that our children have done so that they get that attention from us, which is so vital for children, when we see them doing things that are going to contribute to their increased and improved confidence and competence. That's the way we build those skills in children.

Ask a child about their feelings, ask them how someone else might be feeling if something has happened that we know the other person would not be enjoying. If it's something that the child himself has done that has contributed to that feeling - they've taken someone else's toy, they've hit out in frustration, they've called another child a rude name and it's clear that their action has distressed the other child - then we need to encourage them to think about that and to make amends, to return the toy, to apologise, to go back and assist.

This obviously requires monitoring on our part. It requires us to pay attention to what's going on with our children so that we see these opportunities for learning and for teaching in our children and we don't let them go by. Too often it's so easy for these opportunities, which are in the moment to moment, day to day interaction of daily life, to slip us by because we were too busy - we just didn't notice it. These aren't things that require us to set aside hours to do. They're things that can happen in seconds - in minutes - that contribute dramatically to the way our children learn and the kind of people they turn out to be in later life.

If it's necessary to provide a consequence to a child for continued hurtful behaviour, then we need to think about what the consequence would be. Usually the kind of consequence we're talking about here is a removal of privilege or opportunity, rather than the more coercive, aggressive response that we sometimes resort to in frustration. Coercive, aggressive responses do not teach our children what to do. They stop the behaviour we don't like, but only for a while, and they don't teach our children what we want them to do.

Whenever we are faced with a situation where we need to correct our children's behaviour, the first thing we should ask ourselves is not, "*how can I punish this behaviour I don't like?*", but, "*What do I want my child to do instead?*", or, "*How can I make it clear to them what they should do instead?*", and, "*How can I provide an opportunity in the near future for them to demonstrate that they will behave in the way I want them to behave and not continue in the way that I don't like?*"

**The third building block is Good Communication and Social Skills.** How do social skills help? Children who have good social skills will find it easier to make and keep friends, they are more likeable, they get on well with other people, they have fewer arguments, disagreements and conflict in their lives and it sets children up to have good friendships and good social support networks.

A part of being human is being part of a strong supportive network, or for most of us, a number of social networks in different domains of our lives. They provide us with different things whether it be recreational, sporting, spiritual, friendship, going on holidays together etc. Often if we look at our social networks there are a number of overlapping groups that provide us support in different ways. If we want to make that possible for our children to have those similar kinds of experiences, then we need to provide them with the skills that they will be able to use.

**One of the things we can do is to show an interest in their friends and the family of the friends of our children - an interest in where they go, what they do, how do they spend their time together. This is really important in lots of ways because monitoring what our children are doing, who they are with and where they are is a critically important aspect of protecting teenagers from serious risky behaviour. But it's not something we can leave until they become teenagers. If we leave it until the teenagers are going out with their friends and then start asking "*Who are they? What's their names? Where do they live?*", then it starts to become like an inquisition and we shouldn't be surprised if our teenagers respond with resentment and say that we don't trust them. That creates more trouble when we are trying to avoid trouble. But if this becomes part of our regular involvement, part of the way in which we speak to our children from day one, then this is a continual thing which just flows through into the teenage years with far fewer difficulties.**

We may need to talk to our children about what being a friend is. Often children don't have a clear sense of what being a friend is - what are the things that friends do for each other? When someone is a friend, how do you know they're a friend? How would someone know that you're their friend? It might be sharing things, doing things together, helping each other out when things aren't working well. So we need to help our child understand what being a friend is and then prompt them to perhaps do these things to the people they think of as friends, to make them real friends more than merely acquaintances.

Encourage children to bring their friends to your home, but nevertheless still making it clear that when friends visit there are rules in your home which we expect not only our children but their friends also to follow. Make it clear what the expectations are so that we don't create situations that are then either confusing for our child or create difficulties in responding differently to one person than to another. Then of course following up with appropriate consequences again, teaching appropriate behaviour.

If our child hurts other children, then that's something we need to take seriously. It may be accidental. It may be as a result of frustration, or it may be because the other child has been

provoking them in some way we may or may not have seen. Nevertheless, we really need to get the message across that hurting others is not acceptable behaviour. If we look at the amount of violence in the world today and we're serious about wanting to do something about this, we really need to begin with the way our children respond when things happen that they don't like. We need to be prepared to step in and do something positive if we see this happening.

We need to listen carefully to what our child has done, we need to discuss it with them, how they might have done it differently – “How could you have dealt with that situation in a way that did not lead to this situation?” Make it clear that hurting as a response to a situation is not a satisfactory outcome and is something which you would address seriously. Explain the consequences to your children as to what will happen if they continue to behave this way. Again it requires us to monitor what our children are doing, who they are playing with, how they are sharing, what happens when things happen that they don't like - how they should deal with it.

Again if we see our children doing things we like, we need to be prepared to make sure they know that we are happy with their behaviour and they don't have to resort to inappropriate behaviour to get our attention, which may well be hurting or hitting others.

If this is something that we see recurring in spite of our discussions and suggestions, then again we need to have a consequence. **Don't expect a child to follow the rules if you don't model the right behaviour. If a child hits a child and you go SMACK! “Don't do it again!”, what's the message we are giving our child? – when something happens you don't like, you use aggression. There's a real contradiction here, we really need to be prepared to have other alternative responses ready when something happens where we need to teach our children that it's inappropriate.**

If this is something that is happening at school, and therefore not directly in our orbit of influence, then clearly we need to talk to the school. We need to go and find out what's happening. We need to be able to try to provide a consistent level of support with the school so that the child is getting the same message about the use of aggressive or violent behaviour from both school and parents.

**The fourth building block, Healthy Self-Esteem** is an important aspect of becoming confident and competent. Self-esteem is something that has been talked about for years now and I think to some extent became out of step with some of the other things that parents need to do to raise confident, competent children. It's not something we would want to ignore and neglect, but perhaps we've been putting it on too much of a pedestal; it has to be put together with these other building blocks in a balanced way.

Just to revisit it, we know that children who have good self-esteem are happy, they co-operate well, they succeed at things, and they make friends easily. If children have poor self-esteem they often feel inadequate, they are reluctant to try new things because they think they are going to fail or someone will criticise them and they give up easily when there are challenges or problems that confront them. We know that it is important for children to have good self-esteem. Positive self-esteem is influenced by things such as thinking and believing good things about themselves - the child feeling good about himself or herself. They get to feel this way by getting lots of praise and affection and attention from parents when they are behaving well and getting lots of affection just for being who they are. It is important to have any achievement recognised, no matter how small or imperfect those achievements are.

Some time ago, self-esteem was thought to be made less possible if you put rules and boundaries around children. There was a thought that children established good self-esteem by having no boundaries. In fact, the evidence suggests the opposite. Children who have no boundaries or limits do not have good self-esteem because they don't have a clear sense of where their skills end and where the world starts. Children with boundaries and limits know that in this particular area they are safe and secure and that outside there are other things to learn about. Setting good boundaries is an important step in helping your children develop good self esteem.

Low self-esteem can be caused by lots of things. Often we hear parents comparing children – *“You’ll never be as bright as your sister. She’s got a degree now and you’re not even going to get through high school.”* Those kinds of unfavourable comparisons can really drive down a child’s self-esteem. Lack of self-care and hygiene can lead to children being teased or bullied and made to feel that they’re not as good as someone else. Even exercise and fitness can create situations where children are more likely to feel bad about themselves when they’re compared with others.

Negative thinking about how difficult something is – *“I’ll never be any good at that. I’m never going to be able to learn to do that.”* - these things will contribute to negative self-esteem.

Lots of arguments and conflicts between children and parents will also lead to self-esteem problems. **Typically, if children are constantly being told by their parents that they are wrong, they’re bad, they don’t understand, they’ll never be any good – they believe it. In a child’s world, the parents are the experts and they’re the ones who must be right. The child thinks, “If I’m bad, then I must behave bad.”** So we see this self-fulfilling prophecy start to occur. Of course, neglect or abuse can also cause poor self-esteem.

**What can we do to promote healthy self-esteem in our children? The first thing we can do is to create a safe, predictable world. Children thrive and grow up better when they are in an environment which they can trust, where they know what’s going to happen, where it’s predictable, and there are no unpleasant surprises.** Encourage them to be active, to do lots of things, to go out and get involved in things. Show them a lot of affection; ensure that we say things like *“I love you. Hey, aren’t you great.”* Those positive affirmations are so easy and cheap to make, but somehow the opportunities just slip by and we look back on the day and think, *“Hey, I didn’t do that yesterday, how can I do that more tomorrow?”*

Encourage children to set goals. The goals that children set need to be small ones that are achievable. Sometimes children will set themselves goals that are almost impossible to reach and then they fail to reach them and then they say, *“Hey, I’m not any good, I didn’t reach my goal.”* Here again we need to monitor our children and listen to what they say and if we see them setting a goal that’s going to be difficult for them to reach at least in a brief period of time, then we might like to say to them, *“What’s the first step in the goal? What do you need to do first to get there?”* Encourage them to make that their goal and then move to the next one. It’s the old story of climbing the mountain, the mountain is huge and it’s something you may never be able to do, but if you just put one step after the other and persist at setting that step as a goal, it’s amazing how far you can get. You turn around and think, *“How did I get this far?”* – by setting small goals and working on those - that gets you where you want to go.

Encourage children to express their own ideas and views, help them to recognise their achievements and tell them how great they are when they have achieved even the smallest goal. Children, when they move out into the world, often become anxious and uncertain about whether what they believe is correct. Of course, that’s something that we all struggle with, even when we’re older. By giving children confidence, we’re giving them the opportunity and freedom to express their ideas and views about the world, even if they’re wrong or even if we don’t agree. If children don’t get that opportunity, then we never find out what they’re thinking and never get the opportunity to help them explore alternative ideas.

Encourage laughter and fun. These are important tools to take the pressure off situations that might be getting a bit tense or to relieve stress. Look for opportunities to have fun together. That doesn’t mean poking fun at the child and making fun of the things that they’ve done, but helping them to see fun in life and to share things in a way that you are both seeing the funny side of things.

Helping a child to make decisions, which we as adults find as part of everyday life, can be burdensome and some of us are better at it than others. So if we want our children to grow up to make good decisions then we need to start early, and that doesn’t mean asking a 2-year-old whether you should buy the house in this street or in that street. It means asking them if they want

to read about Teddy or they want to read about the mermaid. These may seem trivial decisions, but they're not, because the earlier we let children make decisions about their life, their world, then they will become good decision-makers as they get older. We see this as a gradual process.

Children don't suddenly wake up one day full of wisdom and knowledge and being able to make good decisions. It's something that comes gradually and it needs to be handed over to them in a graduated way and sure, there are going to be some things that Mum and Dad are going to make decisions about that the children may not be involved in - adult things. But there are some adult things that children can express a view about. Just because they give an idea about what they would like doesn't necessarily mean that's the one we choose, but to involve them, to give them the message that we want to hear their views and that their views are a valuable contribution will help them learn that skill as they get older.

This then leads into **the fifth building block - Being a Good Problem Solver**. Problem solving is an important life skill that will help us well in our personal development, in developing self esteem and confidence. It really is a valuable and useful aid in doing well in course work and further academic learning. It's valuable in sport, hobby, recreational and social activities, developing relationships and helping to maintain and foster them and also in work situations.

How can we help our children become good problem solvers? Again, we need to set a good example. What I mean in this instance is we need to show our children what problem solving looks like because as adults we come to a position often where we've learnt to problem solve and we do it automatically. So a problem presents itself and we go through a set of cognitive strategies and out comes an answer. To a child it looks like a black box. A problem goes in this end and an answer comes out the other. We need to unpack it, we need to say to children, "*This is how I did it.*", and slow it down and show the child the steps that you went through so that they can then learn to apply it to themselves.

Sometimes this can be done in games. There are lots of games that require problem solving. A child needs to make a decision – "*Is it better that I do this or do this? What are the likely consequences of buying Liverpool St Station and having no money left or hoping I'll land on the Chance square or pick up some money next time I pass Go?*". Games that promote problem solving can be a fun way to teach this.

When children come to us with a question with which they are struggling, don't be too quick to give them an answer because we need to engage them in the process. So prompt them a little bit with a question, "*How do you think you could find the answer to that?*", or, "*Who do you think would know the answer to that?*", or, "*What's the first thing we could do to solve that?*" We're not necessarily asking the child to solve the whole problem, that may be too big an ask, but asking them to participate in a small way will increase their skill over time.

If they do manage to come up with a good solution or a solution that has some merit then you need to be prepared to congratulate the child and not expect them to come up with brilliant, perfect solutions the first few times. Any participation, any willingness to struggle with a problem, that's what we need to acknowledge. If we have issues in the family that we're trying to decide – "*Where will we go on the weekend? What video will we get out on Friday night? Which restaurant will we have takeaway from?*" – these are opportunities to include the child in family problem solving to get them to contribute ideas, possible solutions to engage in problem solving. The more they see it happening, the more they participate, the better they'll become.

To break that process down into some steps – be clear about what it is we're trying to come up with. Brain-storm - kids can come up with some great ideas that adults wouldn't think of. We need to evaluate these ideas – "*Is that idea one that is going to work?*" Look ahead and get the child to think about what would happen if they did that. Children in their early years are quite impulsive. They'll come up with an idea and they'll just go ahead and do it. We need to teach them to look ahead. Sitting down with the child afterwards to discuss what happened with their solution.

**The final building block – Becoming Independent.** When we think about what it is we are trying to accomplish as parents, our job really is to take a helpless infant, who is totally dependent on us as parents for his every need, and over a period of time, turn him into a well-functioning, well-adjusted adult who is making a contribution to society. That is not something that is going to happen overnight. Helping our children to become independent is a gradual process. As the child grows and becomes more skilful and more competent, we need to hand over to him or her some of that independence. This is particularly important as children go into the teenage years. They start to put together who they are and what they are going to do with their lives.

Being independent helps them to prepare for later life, helps them participate in family life as a full member, it involves learning a lot of self care and hygiene skills, increasing the responsibilities that they need to take on to be able to have a family of their own, to feel confident about these things. When children are being independent we will see them doing things that help them get ready to go out, dressing themselves, packing their bag, making lunch, helping take on some of the activities that families or any group of people that live together in a shared space need to do to get through the week.

Self-care skills - teeth cleaning, bathing, hair brushing, looking after their things, knowing where to find things, tidying up after themselves. These are things that resonate as we struggle to give our children independence but at the same time in a way that we can tolerate. Getting ready for school without being constantly reminded about how to do this. Starting to prepare their own food. Making some simple meals.

Some of the things that we constantly struggle with often occur at those busy times of the day when we are all trying to get things done and the reality is it's easier to do it yourself. It's much quicker, but the problem then is that they never learn to do those things for themselves. How many of us know people or are in a situation where we've got 24 year olds or 26 or 28 year olds still living at home. Who's cooking the meals and doing the washing? Who's running them around all over the place? Parents say to themselves – "*How did it get to be like this?*" It got like this because you didn't teach them before to boil an egg! You didn't teach them to use a washing machine. I'm exaggerating slightly, but we need to transfer these skills gradually as children become able to take on these abilities. We need to prepare them gradually to take on these roles.

So a morning routine might be getting out of bed at the right time, getting dressed, eating breakfast, having everything ready, arriving to school happy and alert, and greeting their peers and teachers politely. If everyone gets up late and are constantly rushing around, not being organised in advance then we will find we are taking over from our kids to get things done in time. If we continuously give prompts – "*Get up, I've been in here four times! Have you done that yet? Look, I've told you before!*" - what has our child learned? They've learned that because we'll keep reminding them they don't have to take on the responsibility themselves.

So what can we do to help? We can plan ahead. We can encourage them to plan ahead. We can have things ready before we need them, rather than leaving it to the very last minute. We can make sure there are no distractions like having the TV on in the morning or other things that will get in the way of getting things done. We can set some clear rules about what is to be done first. "*OK, TV's fine, but you have to have done all these things first, then you can watch the TV if there's any time left.*"

Sometimes, especially with younger children, having an activity schedule helps. Get some pictures or words and have a list – first pants, then trousers, then shoes. They take the place of us having to keep going in and prompting. The teenager or the child can draw it up themselves, put it on the wall and that reminds them. Then all we need to do is to prompt them to check the list. We transfer the responsibility to the child rather than taking the responsibility on ourselves all the time. If we see them doing it and see any improvement from the past, we need to acknowledge and appreciate that. Don't wait until it's perfect because that may never happen. We've got to look for improvement, not perfection. We'll get to perfection only by taking small steps along the track.



Just quickly looking at situations after school - sometimes kids just have too many things on to be able to complete the jobs they need to do. Maybe there's not enough routine. Children need routine. That's not to say there can't be differences on different days, but it needs to be planned carefully. Allow children time to unwind and have something to eat. Decide on a time when homework is meant to be done and stick to it. Fun and enjoyable activities that kids always want to engage in need to be rewards that can happen after the other things have been done.

Just to summarise what we've been talking about – each parent needs to decide what are the important things for them and their families; what are the things they want their children to learn; what are the beliefs they want them to aspire to, because every family is different, every family needs to think about what its values are.

Some of the core skills that will help our children to come to those values and beliefs are becoming confident in what they do, helping them to reach their potential whatever that may be and to get on well with others, whether that be others in the family, others at school or in some other special area. Parents can encourage children to develop these skills. Parents are their children's first teachers and their most important teachers and they are the teachers who stay with them year after year after year. There are opportunities that we can grasp that will both promote our children's confidence and will promote family harmony in ways that make us feel that this is a worthwhile and joyful activity even though there are always going to be bumps along the road. Encourage our children to show respect and to be considerate to others, help them to become a good communicator and to develop good social skills. Help a child to develop self-esteem. Teach your child to problem solve, encourage them to take responsibility and do things for themselves. Some parents we see say to us, "*How can I do that? I'm not good at that myself.*" A simple answer is – pretend that you are. It works just as well.