Karen’s Kounsel

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KLynn Counseling

 a place for new beginnings

 **“...and that's when I get to wondering, what would happen if I told her she something good, every day?”** [**Kathryn Stockett**](http://www.goodreads.com/author/show/1943477.Kathryn_Stockett)**,** [**The Help**](http://www.goodreads.com/work/quotes/4717423)

I wonder too. What would the lives of our children be like if they heard encouragement every day? How would day to day, year to year outcomes be different? What does it take to build into our children a strong, positive outlook? Talking about self esteem is popular at the moment. It has come to the point that some feel that children shouldn't hear anything negative, they should get a trophy for everything whether it was an honest effort or not. Is this healthy? This month I would like to offer a few suggestions that I believe will bring a little common sense to the subject along with helping to build confidence in your child.

1. As stated above, encouragement is a powerful tool. Find those traits, habits, and talents that are truly worthy of praise, ones that you want to see continue and grow in your child's character. Make mention of them and tell your child that you admire these traits or behaviors and why. Make a point of finding the little things that your child does and let him know that they are noticed and appreciated. Conversely, I have run across parents that say something like "good job" at almost every breath. Over doing praise builds a need to have constant support to be able to do every day jobs and responsibilities. It also gives a false sense of accomplishment that encourages mediocrity. Be balanced.

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2. Be protective. For children to have a strong sense of self esteem they need to feel safe and that the adults in their lives are taking care of them. Just because they want to watch a particular movie, listen to certain types of music, or choose another child to spend time with, does not mean that it is the choice that will benefit them. When you say "no" they may make you feel like they can't live without it or that they will suffer the ultimate fate of not being "like everyone else," but I assure you they will survive. It will be a valuable lesson. Show them that you care enough about them to "take the heat" for the long term gain.

**“I prefer to be true to myself, even at the hazard of incurring the ridicule of others, rather than to be false, and to incur my own abhorrence.”** [**Frederick Douglass**](http://www.goodreads.com/author/show/18943.Frederick_Douglass)

3. Set boundaries. This connects with being protective but goes a step further. It makes the lines of behavior clear. It says that you care enough about them to endure their anger so that you can do what it ultimately best for them. It says that when you lay out consequences for certain behaviors, you will not be too busy or distracted to stick to them because you put their welfare ahead of your own convenience. Now I know that they are not going to think this all through logically, but it will be something that registers in the back of their mind. They may even thank you for it when they are old enough to see it.

4. At the same time you are protecting them and setting boundaries it is important to give them the freedom to "try their wings" and also to fail once in awhile. It helps to build self confidence when a child knows that parents trust them to explore the ideas and individual paths that are in them. If they do fail, it is not necessary to "fix" everything or to try to make it a success somehow. It is just necessary for them to know that you love them, that everybody fails (it is how you learn), and that they will be free to try again. Don't berate them or give into the temptation of "I told you so".

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**Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged.** [**Colossians 3:21**](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Colossians+3:21&version=KJV)

5. Listen when your child is talking. What she says may be simple or lack understanding. It may be unimportant to you when you come home from a stressful day at work. But being able to express their thoughts and feelings without being self conscious builds communication skills and individuality. A sense of individuality helps a child stand against peer pressure. After all, if you don't think that what they think and believe is important, how can they expect that anyone else will?

6. Give them roots and grounding. This is something that is unique to each person and family and can encompass many aspects. It can mean family heritage and traditions. It can be a bond with different family members. It could be the family home. It is good for children to have a link with their ethnic background and the strengths that are associated with it. Even those parts of the history that are less than positive can be a story of overcoming trials and difficulties. These different aspects give a child a sense of identity. We are all a mixture of the good and the bad, the positive and the negative. It is important that they know that and that all those pieces of the puzzle make them the special person they are. Understanding this aids in overcoming their own difficulties when they come.

7. Transplant your faith. Life can look like such a slippery, treacherous road at times. We don't always know which way to turn and we make mistakes. Kids are resilient. They are also forgiving. They need your love because "love covers a multitude of sins." Solid faith gives them the ability to hold on through the tough times and come out stronger. It brings meaning from the meaningless. It is a sure anchor in a storm.



**Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see. Hebrews 11:1**