

Communication Tip No. 8: Balancing Discipline and Self Esteem

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We're in the midst of the holiday season and for many of us that means we'll be spending more time with our kids. Along with quality time celebrating together, this time of year can be one of increased conflict and emotion. During this season—actually all year long—when resolving issues with children, it's important to build our children's self-esteem, even amidst the difficult conversations or disciplining that may occur.



After all, while we may want their behavior to improve, ultimately we want to recognize them as sons or daughters of God, whom He has called to flourish. A recent [study](#) found that a child's sense of self-worth is well established by the age of five. Therefore, no age is too young to focus on the following during conflict resolution:

Concentrate on the issue rather than making personal attacks.

- Example: If a child has lied to you, it is counterproductive to call them a liar. Instead, point out that being dishonest makes it hard to trust him or her. Talk about the decisions they may want to make in the future.

Focus on moving forward rather than rehashing the past.

- Example: If a toddler has repeatedly disobeyed by coloring on the walls, redirect the behavior and focus on productive ways to use the crayon (i.e., on paper).

Keep conversations private rather than talking about the child's behavior to multiple people.

- Example: If you have a kid who is too rough with his or her younger siblings, all of the aunts, uncles and grandparents don't have to know about it. Spreading news of misbehavior will do nothing to improve behavior and self-esteem.

Always end difficult situations with something positive, rather than a harsh word.

- Example: After disciplining a child or discussing unwelcome behavior, remember to say something along the lines of, "I love you very much, and it's because I know you are capable of great things I wanted to take the time to talk to you about this."

Showing kids you respect and value them doesn't mean they don't have to obey. However, by building up their self-esteem, you are helping them not only avoid bad behavior but also to pursue virtue.