20872 - How to Boost Your Daughter’s Self-Confidence in Islam

the question

My parents treated me very badly, to such an extent that I lost my self-confidence and became hesitant and fearful. I couldn’t do anything right and I did not know how to make a decision. I got married and Allah has blessed me with a daughter. I want to avoid what happened to me so that this regrettable experience is not repeated with my daughter. What do you advise me to do?

Summary of answer

How parents boost daughter’s self-confidence

Parents should draw up some general guidelines to follow by telling her what Allah has made permissible and what He has forbidden.
The mother should assign her some tasks that she is able to do.
Parents should try to praise the child in front of her relatives and friends, and give her rewards commensurate with her efforts.
Parents should give her a nickname that will distinguish her from others, but they should not allow anyone to call her by a bad nickname.
Parents should strengthen her will-power.
Parents should strengthen her confidence in dealing with other people.
Parents should strengthen her confidence in gaining knowledge.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

When do daughters form their attitudes towards the world?

At the age of two, a child starts to form her attitude towards the world around her. Some developmental psychologists think that the sense of self-confidence is one of the first of these attitudes and the strength of these feelings at age 2 depends on the kind of care that the child receives and on the parents' attitude in meeting her basic needs.

At this stage, the child shows signs of development by showing a desire for independence, as she needs the freedom to speak, walk and play. All of that is connected to the need to assert herself which can only be achieved by allowing her a measure of independence.

This is confirmed by the theory of development through maturity which says that we should respect the child's individuality and leave him or her to develop naturally.

Reasons for lack of self-confidence

Some girls grow up lacking self-confidence such that they cannot rely upon themselves in any matter, major or minor. They rarely take any initiative and are always waiting for someone to say, "Do such and such."

If faced with a problem, such a girl will be unable to take any decision and may try to avoid confronting the problem, or start crying. This is partly the parents' fault, and it may be for a number of reasons, such as:

1. Too much control ("Do this, don't do that") in major and minor matters alike, even if the matter does not warrant it, so that the child loses her spontaneity and this makes her lose confidence in her actions, and instead she always waits for someone to correct her and reassure her that she is doing the right thing.
2. Blaming and criticizing her for everything she does, exposing her faults and rebuking her if she makes a mistake, so that she is blamed and rebuked more than she deserves at the time when she is expecting praise for her efforts. This destroys the child's motivation to act or to compete in doing anything and doing it well.

3. Not giving the child the opportunity to speak in front of others for fear that she may make a mistake or speak of things that are not desirable, or else allowing her to speak but telling her what she should say.
4. Giving her too many warnings about danger, which will make her always expect the worst and imagine that she is surrounded by danger on all sides.
5. Putting her down or comparing her to others, which makes her think that she has no worth.
6. Making fun of her and mocking her.
7. Not paying attention to her questions.
8. Paying too much attention in a manner that shows excessive worry about her health or her future.

Negative effects of lack of self-confidence

Lack of self-confidence has many negative effects on the child, such as:

- She will not be able to do anything independently, and if she is asked to bring something and finds that it differs from the description given, she will be hesitant; if she is faced with a problem she will be unable to make a decision.
- She will become dull-witted and not creative.
- She will start to complain and feel unhappy whenever anything is asked of her, because she thinks that she will be blamed for whatever she does and that she will not be able to do it in the manner required.
- She will become weak-willed and will have no resolve, and she will feel meek and apathetic in situations where such attitudes are not appropriate, and will become neglectful and disorganized.
- She will suffer anxiety and frustration, and will develop a hostile attitude or a tendency to become introverted and withdrawn.

How parents boost daughter’s self-confidence

In order to avoid these negative effects on the child, parents should use a number of ways to

develop the child’s self-confidence. Some examples follow, but this is not a complete list:

- They should draw up some general guidelines to follow by telling her what Allah has made permissible, which she may do, and what He has forbidden, which she must avoid. They should make her aware of noble attributes and good manners, and instill in her a dislike for bad manners, deeds and words, and the need to steer clear of trivial matters. Then after that they should give her the freedom to act on her own initiative.
- The mother should assign her some tasks that she is able to do. If she makes a mistake, the mother should praise her for her initiative and encourage her, then tell her what she should have done. Sometimes she should just praise her for her efforts, then complete the work in a gentle manner, without telling her directly. If the task is not something that the child is able to do, then the mother may do it and consult the child and ask for her opinion, and let the child state what she thinks is good and is not, so that the child will realize that everyone is vulnerable to making mistakes but also gets things right sometimes. This will strengthen her resolve.
- The parents should try to praise the child in front of her relatives and friends, and give her rewards commensurate with her efforts. They should praise her for the acts of worship that she does, such as praying regularly, memorizing Quran, doing well in her studies, having a good attitude, and so on.
- They should give her a nickname that will distinguish her from others, but they should not allow anyone to call her by a bad nickname. If she makes them angry they should call her by her real name, so that she will realize that she has fallen short in her duty to one or both of them, or that she has wronged somebody, so that she will realize that.
- Strengthening her will-power, by getting her used to two things, namely:

1. Keeping secrets: when she knows how to keep secrets and not divulge them, then her will-power will develop and grow stronger, and thus her self-confidence will increase.
2. Getting her used to fasting, for when she stands firm in the face of hunger and thirst when fasting, she will feel the joy of achieving victory over her Nafs (self), which will strengthen her will-power when facing life, and in turn, this will increase her self-confidence.

- Strengthening her confidence in dealing with other people. This may be done by getting her to do housework, obeying the parents' commands, and letting her sit with the adults and get together with other youngsters.
- Strengthening her confidence in gaining knowledge, by teaching her the Quran and the Sunnah of the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), and his biography, so that she will grow up having acquired abundant knowledge in childhood, and thus develop a sense of confidence in the knowledge that she has, because she will have gained the basic principles of true knowledge, far removed from myths and legends.

What causes a child to feel inadequate?

Parents must take some precautions and take effective measures to save the child from feeling inadequate. Some of the things that cause a child to feel inadequate are: belittling her, humiliating her and mocking her, such as calling her by offensive names and words in front of her siblings and relatives, or even in front of her friends or in front of strangers whom she has never met before.

These are matters which may make her regard herself as insignificant and worthless, or may generate psychological complexes that will make her look at others with hatred and dislike, and make her withdraw into herself in order to escape from life.

Even if the offensive words that slip from the parents' tongues are only for the purpose of disciplining the child for some mistake, great or small, it is not right to use this method to correct her, as this will have a bad effect on the child's psyche and personal conduct, and it will make her accustomed to the language of condemnation and insult that will destroy her psychologically and morally.

The best way of dealing with this problem is to explain to the child, in a gentle manner, where she has gone wrong and to give her proof that will convince her to avoid the mistake in future; the parents should not scold her, and certainly not in front of others. The parents should use good methods in correcting her from the outset, following the example of the Messenger (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) in the way he reformed and trained people and corrected their

mistakes. For the child is very sensitive and readily influenced, irrational and helpless. Building the child’s self-confidence is the first step in building her personality through all stages of life.

For more details, please see the following answers: 215167 , 88153 , 162787 , 10016 , 217409 , and 224758 .

And Allah knows best.