

NURTURING SELF-ESTEEM & PRIDE IN AUTISTIC YOUNG PEOPLE



Parents, carers, teachers and other adults of influence can play an important part in helping an Autistic young person develop self-esteem and pride in who they are. Below are some tips (not exhaustive) from Autistic members of our I CAN family - Autistic young people and adults -- on how you can help nurture that positive sense of self.

ACCEPT AND SUPPORT THEM AS THEY ARE. Autistic young people deserve to know that they are accepted for who they are as they are. Strive to understand how an Autistic young person experiences the world so that they can have more meaningful support and opportunities.

REMIND THEM OF THEIR STRENGTHS. So much of the societal narrative around Autism is around a “deficits model”. Recognising, leveraging and celebrating a young person’s strengths can go a long way toward helping them feel good about who they are and giving them confidence to take on new challenges.

BE THAT SAFE PERSON WHO WILL LISTEN. Many of us can point to one key adult who believed in us before we believed in ourselves. Never underestimate the positive impact that an adult can have when they offer unconditional support to an Autistic young person and listen without judgement.

SHOW GENUINE INTEREST IN AND SEEK OPPORTUNITIES AROUND THEIR PASSIONS. Autistic passions can be a source of immense joy, comfort, learning, connection with others and, in some cases, a pathway to our future study or employment. Showing a genuine interest in these passions is a powerful way to forge a deeper, trusting relationship with an Autistic young person you care about. Look for opportunities for them to connect with others who share similar passions.

See valuable related resources and more Autistic reflections at : <https://www.icannetwork.com.au/2020/06/nurturing-self-esteem-pride-in-autistic-young-people/>

ENCOURAGE LINKS TO THE AUTISTIC COMMUNITY - FOR THEM AND FOR YOU.

It can be very comforting and validating to know that you are not alone and that there are other young people and adults who can relate to many of your experiences.

I CAN's Autistic-led group mentoring and other events run by or predominantly staffed by Autistics can offer great opportunities for social connection and self-esteem.

Your young person might want to check out blogs, books and vlogs by Autistic voices, including other Autistic young people. Seek out these types of resources for your own learning journey as well. Helpful hint: Search the hashtags #ActuallyAutistic and #AskingAutistics on social media.

COMMUNICATE ABOUT AUTISM IN RESPECTFUL TERMS.

As our dear friend Dr. Wenn Lawson notes: *"It's important to talk about Autism in a positive way, not to deny the difficulties, but to open a way forward so those difficulties can become less so. A positive outlook enthuses, creates, restores and breeds hope."*

How adults communicate about Autism influences how Autistic young people see themselves - and how the rest of the world will treat them, too. Value their voices and involve them as much as possible in any decisions or activities that relate to them. Always presume competence and prioritise their privacy, dignity and sense of self. Embrace the value of diversity in all forms, including neurodiversity.

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