



# Learning to Grow

MAKING A DIFFERENCE TOGETHER

## Building Self-Confidence: 4 "Ch" Words

"I Think I Can...I Think I Can...I Think I Can..."

Although little, the blue engine in the story *The Little Engine That Could*, was confident that if he tried --he could help another train get over a mountain. The story illustrates the roles that not only kindness and compassion play in our lives, but also confidence.

Self-confidence is a measure of our belief in our own abilities. According to Dr. Michelle Borba, self-confidence leads to a greater sense of well-being. Children who have self-confidence are:

- ♥ more likely to stick with harder tasks and bounce back from failures;
- ♥ are more engaged in school, are happier, have stronger relationships;
- ♥ have greater self-assurance and creativity, sounder decision-making abilities, and overall, more positive mental health.

Self-confidence plays a key role in children's lifelong success.

Early childhood research has discovered that there are important experiences that help to build self-confidence in children. These are summarized by using 4 "Ch" words. You can build your child's self-confidence by giving her the following:

- ♥ **Cheerleader:** one who takes pride in your child's accomplishments, and who praises her efforts regardless of the outcome
- ♥ **Chances:** opportunities to be successful with just enough support; and also, to learn from mistakes and try again
- ♥ **Chores:** real life tasks that give your child responsibility for something
- ♥ **Choices:** meaningful, safe choices from which your child can choose



In this newsletter, we will present examples of how you can give your child these 4 "Ch" experiences to build her self-confidence at any age level – infants, toddlers and preschoolers

### This newsletter includes:

- ♥ **Age-specific information and suggestions** about activities to do with your infant, toddler, or preschooler,
- ♥ **Featured activities** for each age group,
- ♥ **How This Helps:** a summary of your child's development by doing these activities together,
- ♥ **Resources:** for more information about this topic, and
- ♥ **Suggested Books:** a list of books to read with your child.

# Infants

When parents and caregivers comfort an infant, respond to her cries and needs, talk and play with her, and express excitement in her milestones, the following foundational beliefs are nurtured, "I am safe," "I am accepted and loved by others," "I can trust those who care for me," and "I can do some things on my own."

Here are specific examples of how you can build an infant's self-confidence:

- ♥ **Cheerleader:** When she rolls over, clap loudly and say, "Hooray...you rolled over today! You worked really hard to learn how to do that!"
- ♥ **Chances:** Observe and respond. For example, if baby is not yet able to find an object that is fully hidden under a burp cloth, then give her "just enough" support by having her find a partially hidden object (e.g., a doll whose legs are sticking out from under the burp cloth). After she masters this, then try fully hiding the object.
- ♥ **Chores:** When taking off her shirt, ask her to lift her hands. Then say, "You helped me by lifting up your right and your left hand. What a big helper you are!"
- ♥ **Choices:** During meal time hold up two spoons and ask, "Which one would you like to hold today?" (Watch which one she looks at or points to.) After she chooses, verbalize it. "You chose the pink spoon to hold today. Mommy will use the green spoon to feed you."



## Activity for Infants: *You Did Something New Today*

*Adapted from: Sesame Street in Communities*

What You Need:

None

What to Do:

1. When you see your infant doing something for the first time, clap your hands and cheer!
2. Next, sing about what she did. You can take a familiar tune (e.g., "Farmer in the Dell") and change the words to sing about what she accomplished (e.g., "You rolled over with your body," "You sat up all by yourself," etc.)
3. Sing a song when your infant does something new. To hear the tune, search for *Build Your Baby's Self-Confidence by Sesame Street in Communities* on YouTube.

*You did something new today  
Hooray, hooray, hooray!  
You (took your first steps today)!  
Hooray, hooray, hooray!  
(Name of child), you did something new!  
And I'm so very proud of you!  
Hooray, hooray, hooray!*

*(See page 5 for information on how doing these kinds of activities with your child helps her development and school readiness.)*



# Toddlers

When you give your toddler the chance to try doing things on her own, show her that you are proud of her effort, and allow her opportunities to gain independence -- you build her self-confidence. Your toddler will gain the following foundational beliefs about herself: "I am capable," "I can help; I can contribute," "I can make good decisions."

Here are specific examples of how you can build a toddler's self-confidence:

- ♥ **Cheerleader:** Tune into the things your toddler is doing and make specific comments. You can say, "You are pushing the pedals so hard with your legs to make the tricycle go! Look, it's moving!"
- ♥ **Chances:** Break down new experiences for her. For example, if she is afraid to go down a slide, you could slide down yourself to show her it's safe or have her slide a favorite stuffed animal down first. Then see if she'll go down while holding your hand or on your lap. Let her know that it's okay if she's not ready to go down on her own yet; and try again another time.



- ♥ **Chores:** Toddlers love "grown up" tasks. For example, let her water a plant or safely feed a pet. Also, be specific about which tasks you want your child to help with. For example, "Please pick up your blocks" is clearer than, "Let's clean up the room."
- ♥ **Choices:** Let your toddler choose between two possibilities (too many options can be overwhelming). For example, let her choose which color shirt to wear -- the pink or the purple one. If she doesn't want to do something you asked her to do, such as putting on a jacket, try giving her the choice of putting it on in the bedroom or in the kitchen.

## Activity for Toddlers: Simple Paper Bag Kite

What You Need:

- Paper lunch bag
- Yarn or strong twine/string
- Popsicle stick
- Streamers
- Tools: tape, scissors, glue
- Embellishments: stickers, paint, markers, crayons, construction paper, washi tape, etc



What to Do:

1. Help your child decorate the paper bag by using any embellishments she chooses.
2. Use scissors to snip a little hole on the bottom base of the bag. This will be used for the kite string.
3. Cut a piece of yarn or string about 18-24" long. Tie one end to the middle of a popsicle stick and feed the other end through the hole in the bag (the popsicle stick should now be inside the bottom of the bag, and the string out the hole).
4. Show your child how to attach the streamers to the open end of the bag using tape.
5. Her kite is ready to fly! Find a nice open area and have her run with it. Have fun!

*(See page 5 for information on how doing these kinds of activities with your child helps her development and school readiness.)*



# Preschoolers

When you give your preschooler opportunities to solve problems, to attempt tasks for herself, to make mistakes and learn from them, and take on increasing responsibilities -- her self-confidence grows. Your preschooler will gain the following foundational beliefs about herself: "I can come up with creative ideas to solve problems," "I made a mistake, but I can learn from it," and "I can do it!"

Here are specific examples of how you can build a preschooler's self-confidence:

- ♥ **Cheerleader:** Focus on her effort, regardless of the outcome of the situation, and recognize small changes and improvements. You can say, "You were really thinking hard when you worked on that puzzle. I saw the way you tried different pieces to see if they fit."
- ♥ **Chances:** Give her the chance to learn from her mistakes and to solve problems. If she spilled some juice while pouring it, resist the urge to scold her. Instead say, "You tried to pour your own juice. Good for you for trying. Some of it spilled on the table, what should we use to clean up the juice? Yes, let's wipe it with this sponge, and you can try again!"



- ♥ **Chores:** Let your preschooler be involved in the real-life tasks you are doing and recognize and be specific about what she has accomplished. If you're cooking, you can ask her to help set the table and then say, "You counted out all 4 napkins and put them on the table. Great! Now we can eat!"
- ♥ **Choices:** Give more complex choices, such as what to pack in a picnic basket. You can say, "Can you decide what to pack in the picnic basket for our trip to the park today?" Show her the food items and supplies she can choose from, then let her do it herself. Remember to only give her options for choices that you will allow her to make. When she's done, you can say, "Do we have everything we need for serving and eating?" Then go on your picnic and enjoy the goodies she chose!

## Activity for Preschoolers: *Bubble Wrap Tapestry*

### What You Need:

- Extra-large bubble wrap
- Ribbons (various colors and width)
- Strips of cloth, cut into smaller pieces
- Tape
- Children safe scissors

### What to Do:

1. Create a pocket in each bubble by showing your child how to use the scissor to cut a small opening in the back of each bubble on the bubble wrap.
2. Then have her fill each bubble with ribbon or small strips of cloth of her choice.
3. Have her put a piece of tape to close the opening of each filled bubble.
4. Turn it over and admire the beautiful tapestry of colors she created!



*(See page 5 for information on how doing these kinds of activities with your child helps her development and school readiness.)*

## How This Helps

The activities suggested in this newsletter help promote many different aspects of development:

### Physical Development

- ♥ Use and strengthen small muscles, e.g., fingers, hands
- ♥ Use and strengthen large muscles, e.g., legs

### Social and Emotional Development

- ♥ Develop a close bond with you; build trust with you
- ♥ Feel important and good about herself

### Language and Literacy Development

- ♥ Increase her observation, listening and understanding skills and her attention span
- ♥ Connect words and sounds she hears with what she experiences



### Cognitive Development

- ♥ Develop her creativity and imagination
- ♥ Develop her thinking and problem solving skills

## Kids in the Kitchen

Cooking teaches valuable lessons such as math (quantities, measurement), science (how matter changes), fine motor (stirring, pouring), and literacy (print awareness). As you make this recipe with your child, talk about kitchen safety. Show her how to handle items safely and allow her to do as much as she is capable of. Praise her efforts, and ask questions throughout the process to encourage her thinking skills. Most of all, have fun!

### Prizeworthy Pretzels

*Adapted from NAEYC's The Cooking Book, by Laura J. Colker*

Ingredients:

- 2 (16 oz.) loaves frozen bread dough
- 1 egg white
- 1 teaspoon water
- Kosher salt
- Nonstick spray



Directions:

1. Thaw bread dough, then divide into about 24 pieces
2. Show your child how to roll each piece into a ball; then have her help roll each ball into rope, about 12" long (measure with ruler)
3. Together, shape dough into traditional pretzels, shapes, or letters (e.g., the first letter in her name)
4. Spray baking sheet with nonstick spray
5. Place pretzel pieces on baking sheet and let stand for 20 minutes before baking
6. Preheat oven to 350 degrees
7. Combine egg white and water in small bowl and whisk
8. Using pastry brush, have your child coat pretzels with egg white mixture
9. Sprinkle pretzels with kosher salt

## Resources

### ***Thrivers: The Surprising Reason Why Some Kids Struggle and Others Shine* by Dr. Michelle Borba**

In this book, Dr. Borba offers practical, actionable ways to develop seven character traits (self-confidence, empathy, self-control, integrity, curiosity, perseverance, and optimism) in children from preschool through high school.

### ***Zero to Three Resources for Families on Developing Self-Confidence***

<https://www.zerotothree.org/?s=self-confidence>

In these articles, learn more about the many ways that parents can help their child age birth-three learn to feel good about who they are and to believe in themselves and their abilities.



## Suggested Books

Discover these books and more at the **Hawai'i State Public Library** [www.librarieshawaii.org](http://www.librarieshawaii.org).

### Infants and Toddlers

#### ***On the Night You Were Born* by Nancy Tillman**

This beautifully illustrated book celebrates the specialness of each child and conveys "you are the one and only you, and always will be." The gentle tone creates a sense of safety and warmth, and is a sweet tribute to the uniqueness of every child.

#### ***Where is Baby's Belly Button?* by Karen Katz**

Adorable babies play peekaboo in this delightful interactive book. By lifting the flaps, baby learns where eyes, mouth, belly button, feet, and hands are.

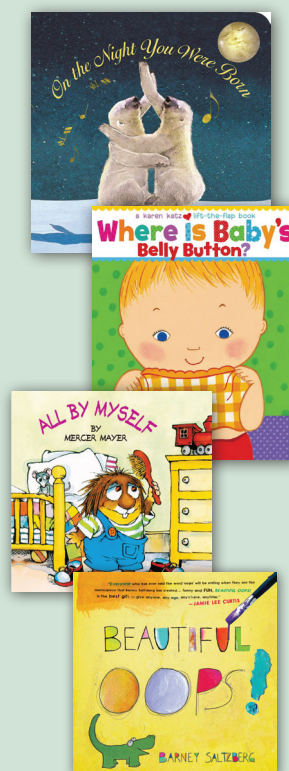
### Preschoolers

#### ***All By Myself* by Mercer Mayer**

Mercer Mayer's Little Critter wants to show you all the things he can do for himself in this classic, funny, and heartwarming book. Whether he's tying his shoes, coloring a picture, or riding his bike, both parents and children alike will relate to this beloved story.

#### ***Beautiful Oops!* by Barney Saltzberg**

This one-of-a-kind interactive book, filled with pop-ups, lift-the-flaps, holes, and bends, teaches a life lesson that all parents want their children to learn: It's OK to make a mistake. In fact, hooray for mistakes! *Beautiful Oops!* shows young readers how every mistake is an opportunity to make something beautiful.



**Learning to Grow** is a project of the University of Hawai'i, Windward Community College, with funding from the Hawai'i Department of Human Services. Visit our website at [www.learningtogrowhawaii.org](http://www.learningtogrowhawaii.org) or visit us on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/learningtogrowhawaii](https://www.facebook.com/learningtogrowhawaii)