

One Mother's Quest to Raise the Self-Esteem of Her Two Daughter's With ADHD

by Heidi Bernhardt, CADDAC

Most parents are aware that their children with ADHD struggle with poor self-esteem and find it heartbreaking to hear their child voice negative comments about themselves like, "I'm stupid, I'm just so dumb I'll never be able to do this". Parents hate to see their kids discouraged, afraid to try difficult or new things and to hear their children lament that they feel misunderstood and that no one likes them. A child with ADHD will receive at least twice as many negative messages in a day than other children.

Sometimes as parents, educators, coaches and others who interact with these kids, we are the ones who inadvertently or even intentionally relay these negative messages in the hope that it will alter the child's behaviour. In fact, positive consequences in the form of verbal feedback, has been shown to be far superior in changing the behaviour of children with ADHD and I would suspect most children. Unfortunately, as humans in the midst of busy lives we tend to pay attention to the things that annoy, interrupt or distress us and ignore our children and the things they are doing when they are behaving well or accomplishing what we have asked of them.

Parents will need to make a conscious effort and actively work on increasing their child's view of themselves by balancing out all the negative messages their children are getting throughout the day with more positive feedback and experiences.

Here are several links to tips that you might find useful;

<http://psychcentral.com/blog/archives/2014/01/02/10-strategies-for-helping-kids-with-adhd-build-self-confidence/>

http://www.healthcentral.com/adhd/raising-child-with-adhd-192990-5_3.html

<http://www.netdoctor.co.uk/conditions/adhd/a5237/self-esteem-and-adhd-child/>

http://www.adhdtogether.com/sites/default/files/Ideas-help-build-self-esteem_COA.pdf

One mother, Liz Wisnieski, a graphic designer who herself has ADHD, decided that her daughters Kathleen (11) and Sarah (8), needed an extra boost to their self-esteem. When her daughter Kathleen was upset about struggling at school and having to re-start medication, Liz printed out a list of famous inventors, musicians, artists, and athletes who were diagnosed with ADHD. She lit up.

Liz realized that her daughters along with most children were only hearing negative messages about ADHD and that's when she decided that her daughter's needed a more visual lasting message about the positives aspects of ADHD. She designed some posters to hang in her daughters' bedrooms to remind them of all the positives of the condition (see below). She hopes that these posters can help bring positive awareness of ADHD to as many people as possible.

You can purchase one of Liz's posters at <https://www.etsy.com/shop/ADHDPsters>