Self-Esteem Research

Self-esteem is how your child feels about herself.

Doctors, scientists, teachers, and other people have done a lot of research about hearing loss and self-esteem. We looked at some of the research and put it together for you on this page.

The research we found talks about these questions and topics:
Do children with a hearing loss have lower self-esteem?
What if your child is deaf and you are hearing?
Is sign language better for self-esteem?
How will school affect your child's self-esteem?
What else affects self-esteem?

Keep reading to learn what some of the research says.
If you want to know where we got the information, click on the research links.

Do children with a hearing loss have lower self-esteem?

- Not all research has the same answer to this question.
- Some research says that children with a hearing loss feel just as good about themselves as hearing children [Emerton, 1998; Foster, 1998; Munoz-Baell & Ruiz, 2000; Stone, 1998].
- But other research says that a child with hearing loss feels worse about herself [Bat-Chava, 1994; Mulcahy, 1998; Schlesinger, 2000]. There are many reasons why this could be true. Maybe:
  - She can't make her parents understand what she is saying.
  - She can't understand what her parents say to her.
  - She doesn't a deaf friend to play with.
  - She doesn't have a deaf role model to look up to.
  - She feels like nobody understands her.
- If your child has a low self-esteem, there are ways for you to help:
  - Tell her you think she's smart, nice, good-looking, and funny.
  - Focus on the things she's good at.
  - Tell her that you love her.
  - Spend a lot of time with her.
  - Read our page on self-esteem

Learn more
What if your child is deaf and you are hearing?

- Most deaf children have parents who are both hearing.
- Some research says that deaf children whose parents are also deaf have higher self-esteem [Bat-Chava, 1993]. This could be because:
  - They're not the only deaf person in the family. Being the only deaf person in a hearing family can be hard.
  - They can communicate better with their parents.
- But other research says that it doesn't matter whether or not the parents are also deaf [Gurp, 2001; Deselle, 1994]. This research says what matters most is how well the parents and the child can communicate.
- Learn how to communicate with your child. However she communicates, learn how to do it too.
- If your child uses sign language, learn how to sign as well as you can.
- If she reads lips, practice talking so that she can understand you.
- If she uses whatever hearing she has left, talk so that she can hear you.
- The better you can communicate with your child, the better she will feel about herself.
- To learn more, read our page on communication <http://dfccdevlp:8080/communicating/index.jsp>.

Is sign language better for self-esteem?

- Some research says that a child with hearing loss who uses sign language has higher self-esteem [Bat-Chava, 1993]. This could be because:
  - She can say what she's thinking more easily.
  - People who know sign language can understand her more easily.
  - When other people use sign language, she can understand them well.
- Other research says that's not true. These scientists say:
  - It doesn't matter whether children use sign language, speech, or some other way of communicating.
  - The important thing is that they can understand other people, and other people can understand them [Gurp, 2001].
- There's no way of communicating that's "right" for everyone with a hearing loss. This is because:
  - Each child is different.
  - Some children have more hearing left. It might be easier for them to learn how to read lips and speak.
  - Children have different ways of learning best.
- Some children learn best from seeing things. They might like using sign language.
- Other children learn best from using the hearing they have left.
Parents have different hopes for their children.

- Some parents want their children to learn to speak.
- Some parents prefer sign language.
- To find out more about deciding how to communicate with your child, read our pages on communication choices
  <http://dfccdevlp:8080/communicating/choices/index.jsp>

How will school affect your child’s self-esteem?

- How well your child can read can affect how she feels about herself. Research says that children with hearing loss who can read well have higher self-esteem [Deselle, 1994; Gurp, 2001].
- One scientist found that hard-of-hearing students who take mainstream
  <http://dfccdevlp:8080/learning/choices/mainstream/checklist.jsp>English classes have higher self-esteem than students who take special classes [Gurp, 2001].
  - This is because they feel like their hearing loss isn't putting them behind hearing kids in school.
- But some children feel better in classes with other children with hearing loss. This is because:
  - It can feel good to be with kids who know what it's like to have a hearing loss.
  - They don't feel left out of class discussions.
- Read our pages on school choices <http://dfccdevlp:8080/learning/choices/index.jsp> to figure out what school fits your child the best.

What else affects self-esteem?

- Research says that three things affect self-esteem the most [Gurp, 2001]:
  - How good your child thinks she looks.
  - How close your child feels with her parents (or whoever takes care of her).
  - How well your child gets along with other kids her age.
- These things are also important:
  - How athletic she feels.
  - How smart she feels.

Learn more

- To find out more about self-esteem, read our section on self-esteem
- Here’s another good page about self-esteem at www.kidshealth.org
- Here’s a page that explains self-esteem to children at www.kidshealth.org
Sources (in the order they appear above)


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You can find this page online at:
http://www.raisingdeafkids.org/growingup/esteem/research.jsp