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PARENT HEALTH BULLETIN

Reprinted by:
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WALLY CAT UPDATE

Hello Wild Cub and Wild Cat Parents,

As always, I would like to thank all of my Wild Cat and Wild Cub parents who allow their children to keep sending me emails.

I am so proud of all of my smart and talented Wild Cat and Wild Cub friends. Parents, if you have any suggestions or comments for Wally Cat, please feel free to email me at wally.cat@uky.edu.

Wally Cat 



Building your Child's Self-Esteem



Society's Effect on Self-Esteem

We live in a culture with a multi-million dollar fashion and cosmetic industry that makes lots and lots of money by telling people they need to improve the way they look. We're surrounded with messages in: advertising, magazines, billboards, fashion shows, cosmetic parties, and beauty salons.

They all use different ways to tell us we desperately need their products. The

more terrible we think we look, the better the chance they have of selling us their products. Notice the ads in magazines. The model appears flawless. The teeth are straight and white. The hair is well groomed with a "fashionable" haircut. The skin is smooth and flawless. Some magazines may even add brushing or contouring to hide the imperfections they don't want the consumer to see. Now notice the

Continued on the back 

Your child will benefit from the confidence they see in you.

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product being advertised. The text may refer to leading scientific studies that indicate your “need” for this product. These are just some of the ways companies sell their products and show “the perfect body” or “look” you will achieve if you use it.

So what happens when we still look like our super selves? When we don't look like the models in the magazines or movie stars, we often think there must be something wrong with who we are. When the product doesn't

work, we blame ourselves and think we are failures. Next time you see an advertisement on TV or in a magazine, ask yourself the following questions: Who really looks like this? What are the messages that society is sending to our children?

Spontaneously show your child affection. Give your child a hug and tell her how proud you are of her for no special reason except that she is special to you and that she is a great kid.

Tips on how to help build your child's self esteem

- **Be a positive role model.** Kids will often model the behavior they see in others. Nurture your own self-esteem. Your child will benefit from the confidence they see in you.
- **Remind your child of their strengths.** If your child has a tendency to dwell on their weaknesses, remind him of his strengths. This will motivate him to keep trying.
- **Give children positive reinforcement.** When your child behaves in a mature way or does more than is expected of her, acknowledge her behavior and praise her efforts.
- **Spontaneously show your child affection.** Give your child a hug and tell her how proud you are of her for no special reason except that she is special to you and that she is a great kid.

- **Watch what you say in front of your children.** Don't just correct them when they are wrong, take the time to praise and encourage them to try.

- **Create a safe and loving environment for your child.** Kids who are abused or don't feel safe in their home often suffer from low self-esteem.
- **Involve your child in activities that will allow him to build his self-esteem like sports or volunteer work.** Kids with high self-esteem are much more likely to resist negative peer pressure. A little encouragement can go a long way in the life of a child.



SOURCES:

- Centers for Disease Control—www.cdc.gov
- Children, Youth & Women's Health Service—www.cyh.com
- Kidshealth—http://kidshealth.org/parent/emotions/feelings/self_esteem.html

Adapted from the August 2005 HEEL Youth Health Bulletin

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