

Confident children are eager learners

Evonne's story



Three-year-old Evonne loves going to preschool. She enjoys challenging activities and does not give up when things get tough. Evonne is a keen learner and talks to her teachers about how she is going on an activity and asks for help when she needs it. She is focused and happy to try new things. Evonne shows delight and pride in her achievements, such as when she was able to complete a puzzle by herself for the first time. Her friend, Libby is also a keen learner but gets easily discouraged when she is not doing so well (e.g., she stopped playing ball games when she had trouble catching the ball). Sometimes Libby avoids trying new things on her own, but is willing to give things a go with some encouragement. She is especially delighted when people notice and talk to her about what she has done. Why is it that Evonne is confident in her own abilities and Libby needs a bit of extra support to feel happy about what she has done?

Children are born curious

Babies are born curious. They want to touch, see, hear and taste everything within their reach. Toddlers and preschoolers demonstrate their need to understand their world by asking many 'why?' questions. Adults can foster children's natural curiosity by being warm, supportive and encouraging. Even though answering children's questions can sometimes be challenging and repetitive, when adults understand how important these are for children's developing sense of self and demonstrate patience and interest, children's curiosity is supported. Adults' responses can give children the basis for solving many challenging and difficult problems later on in life. Curiosity helps children to become confident learners.

Being warm and supportive nurtures and develops children's natural curiosity.

Curiosity leads to confidence

Children's curiosity drives them to explore their surroundings and try new things. From their repeated experiences of seeing their actions affect their world and the people in it, children begin to see themselves as capable and having control. This helps children to feel good about themselves and builds their self-confidence. For example, Libby may need to start off playing with balls that are easier for her to catch so that she can see that she is capable of playing ball games.

Confident children are motivated learners

Children who are confident are motivated to engage in more experiences. They expect to have successful and positive experiences because they have done so in the past. For example, Evonne may have successfully completed puzzles with some help from her dad before being able to do it on her own. Feeling confident helps children do well in all aspects of their life, both now and into the future. Confident children are more able to build positive relationships, do better at school and become happier, successful adults. This is important in developing and maintaining good mental health and wellbeing.

How can parents and carers support children's developing curiosity and confidence?

Parents and carers play an important role in supporting children's developing curiosity and confidence. Some ways they can do this are by:

- ▶ Arranging safe and interesting spaces where children are free to explore and see the effects of their actions.
- ▶ Giving children warm and supportive care that helps them feel safe to explore.
- ▶ Interacting with children so they can see that what they do gets a response (e.g., when I laugh Mum laughs too).
- ▶ Answering children's questions appropriately. It's ok if you don't know the answer. You can always suggest that you both find out together.
- ▶ Asking children questions to help them solve problems and promote further learning.
- ▶ Working with children at first, then giving them more space as they become more confident in their own abilities.
- ▶ Helping children to experience that learning is fun.
- ▶ Acknowledging what children have done well and not so well. Explain to children that part of learning is not getting things right all the time. Encouraging older children to talk through their experiences (e.g., how they are going about solving a problem such as deciding which shoes to put on).
- ▶ Using rewards and praise selectively. Focus on the child's effort rather than the outcome and emphasise that putting in effort will help them get better at what they're doing.

Children can be more curious about some things than others. Their level of confidence can also vary depending on what they are doing and how they are feeling. Children's motivation is not all about how they have been cared for, but there are some things parents, carers and early childhood staff can do to help them along the way. For example, Evonne and Libby seem to have different levels of confidence. It may be their experiences with those around them have been different.

Confidence helps children to cope with life's ups and downs.



This resource and further information on the national KidsMatter Early Childhood initiative is available to download at www.kidsmatter.edu.au. The KidsMatter Early Childhood team also welcomes your feedback which can be submitted through the website.



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