

## Teaching Self Confidence

**“Piglet sidled up to Pooh from behind. "Pooh," he whispered. "Yes, Piglet?" "Nothing," said Piglet, taking Pooh's paw, "I just wanted to be sure of you."**

Before we begin talking about self confidence, I would like to clarify what I think a quality Martial Arts program and a Senior Instructor should be able to do for their community.

Martial arts should be able to assist a parent in building many strong, positive traits in a child. One of the **First** goals of a quality martial arts class is to reinforce the positive goals and values of the parents and families that have entrusted their children to them, teaching punching and kicking should be taught but not at the expense of life skills - they come first.

Our goals as master instructors is service, assistance, and guidance, to our families. It should never be just about a student(s) honoring an instructor, but instead an instructor honoring the position of trust bestowed on him - giving back one hundred fold that which he receives.

### **Self Confidence Issues;**

A child with good self confidence is easy to spot in a crowd. He or she possesses a bright, engaging smile and a positive attitude. Effortlessly, this child makes friends and accepts leadership opportunities.

Timid and shy children, however, are too often relegated to the sidelines. For these children, their problems start small; a child who can't interact with his or her peers has a hard time look an adult in the eye, or won't step into a game or program because they lack confidence.

But as a child grows so to do these problems, and before long this child is the target of bullies, susceptible to peer pressure and withdrawn in the classroom, playground, and possible at home. Kids like this are called "painfully shy" for good reason, for them it must be very emotionally painful to be in this place.

A child with self-confidence problems needs to improve his or her self-esteem. Here are some of the characteristics of a child with low self-esteem, followed by ways to assist a child with their self confidence issues;

Timid and shy  
Loner, not a leader  
Bully magnet  
Fear of failure  
Peer pressure

### **The Look of Confidence**

What does confidence look like, and why is “*Looking Confident*” important? Muggers that were interviewed from their jail cell said the same thing over and over, how a person physically presented themselves when passing by the mugger was extremely important and in many cases it was the determining factor in the mugger choosing to pursue that person.

There are some definite physical qualities involved in projecting the look of confidence. These qualities include:

- Great posture
- Good eye contact
- Strong and controlled voice

### **Great Posture;**

Our posture communicates what we think of ourselves long before we ever open our mouth to speak one single word. Most people get a significant portion of their first impression of us from how we walk, stand, sit and in general how we physically present ourselves.

#### *Things you could practice*

Lead by example a parent having a good confident look is paramount, point out others that look and walk with confidence when your out shopping, friendly reminders to stand and sit with good posture will be helpful, but don't nag. Practice with your child how to have a good posture when greeting people. Always take advantage of their daily routine to remind your child of the importance of good posture.

#### *What to avoid*

Hitting your child (slapping the back of the head use to be normal)when you expect good posture is a short term fix that will destroy any long term self confidence your trying to build DON'T HIT. Avoid the nagging phrases, using nagging terminology like "I told you" just before your request for them to "sit up straight" will only promote conflict and resistance, and shift the focus from working on their posture to how you said what you said. Avoid embarrassing your child; maybe having a simple physical gesture that you can do that reminds them to focus on how their standing or sitting. A simple light rub of the shoulder by you will be much more user-friendly over the long haul, and easier on everyone.

#### *How a martial arts classes will help*

Your child's posture is a continual focus of the instructor, and good posture is practiced over and over. We ask them to stand straight at Attention stance, sit with their back straight when on the floor, and work on their posture when executing their patterns. We call this “Looking like a Black Belt” and kids love doing just that. We talk and roll play repeatedly about not looking like a victim when in public by having a confident stride in their walk, and end the class each day by having the student move past the instructors and shake our hands, giving us a moment to work on a good greeting with strong eye contact.

### **Eye Contact;**

Making eye contact with someone yelling at your child, a bully at school, a mugger or an abductor seems small, but can be the only difference between your child becoming one of their victims or not. Good eye contact tells people you are focused on them,

confident in yourself, and could possibly describe the person to authorities if needed.

#### Things you could practice

Be the living example of what you want your child to do, make sure you practice what you preach. Set a standard of good quality eye contact when having a conversation with your child, and reward them with a serious "That a boy/girl, I love how you focused so confidently when we talked" and add a quick high 5 when they do well. Play games that focus on eye contact, sit across the table and look at each other trying not to blink first is the goal, make sure you let your child win regularly. Sit down in the mall and people watch, asking your child to describe the person that just walked by. Practice how to greet someone with good posture, eye contact, a firm hand shake and strong verbal greeting

#### What to avoid

Stay away from trying to get a positive outcome from a negative approach, using words like "look at me young lady" "you need to look at me when we're talking" done in an angry tone won't work. Don't grab their face and physically focus them on you with that angry glare parents seem to think will make children mind. . . it doesn't.

#### How a martial arts class will help

Our classes always start with a short period (just before lining up to bow in and begin) when instructors and the leadership team will help tie belts where needed and check in with each student, and we make eye contact an important part of this time. During class while practicing self defense, 1 step sparring and any drill taught with a partner eye contact with your partner is essential. Likewise, at the end of our classes when we are bowing out and dismissing the class we ask the students to file past the instructors and shake our hands, good quality eye contact is required with each handshake.

#### **Strong, Controlled Voice:**

Great posture and good eye contact are the perfect starting points to presenting a confidence that people notice, and acknowledge, adding a strong controlled voice reinforces this and tells others "you are someone to be listened to". Whether you are trying to get your point of view across to someone, part of a group that is working on a project together, or making sure a play ground bully or a would-be assailant is stopped in their tracks, the child with a confidence in their stride, eyes and voice will be considered the leader, and the person to be listened to.

Let me ask you, have you ever been around a person that is loud for no particular reason, but is just naturally very loud? Do they keep your interest or make you want to leave the area? How about someone that gets loud when they want to make sure their point of view is heard, does it ever convince you that they are right just because they are loud or do you tend to end the conversation quickly and leave. Does loud convey confidence, or insecurity? I don't think this is the way you want you child to present themselves.

#### Things you could practice

Make time to allow your child to have a say-so, tell a story, and explain their day or a particular event. Ask them to tell it standing up, using their hands, but with a controlled voice. Let a child be heard is great for their self confidence. Practice talking to them in an excited low voice, and then in a loud excited voice, ask them which one of the voices they understood best, which voice drew them in.

### What to avoid

Don't cut-off or interrupt their sentences, waiting until they are done to correct something, you will only encourage a loud aggressive voice otherwise. Don't lose control of your voice, be the living example of a strong, but controlled voice.

### How martial arts classes will help

Our leadership program is designed for the child to learn that their voice is the most important quality they could have. Learning to defuse a conflict with a confident strong voice is the first line of defense. We will regularly practice what to say and how to say it when teaching a self defense technique. The kihap or martial art yell when practicing a technique is the perfect place to start working on a strong yet controlled voice. The yell should not be just loud and long (like someone might do when falling off a cliff) but instead short, concise, and strong, done within one breathe out. Try this short drill; pretend you are taking a very aggressive bite out of an apple, and make a sharp short loud yell while doing so. The yell should end once you have started to pretend you are chewing.

### **Boost Your Child's Confidence**

- 1) Do this work on the premise that the job of building confidence is very long term and never has a point that you stop or it ends. All of my children are grown and have their own children now, but I still take advantage of any opportunity that I get to reinforce one of my children's confidence in what they are doing.
- 2) So don't wait for the perfect moment to give positive feedback, look for any small efforts your child makes. Be careful of giving false praise when doing this work, your child will see through an inflated praise very quickly, and you will lose your credibility.

Learn more about how martial arts addresses specific problems related to a lack of confidence and other important issues. Call us today Sonoma Taekwondo Center 707-935-7118 or drop us an e-mail at [sabum9@sbcglobal.net](mailto:sabum9@sbcglobal.net)