



**How can coaches help
build self-esteem in
young children? ▶**

Building self-esteem means helping children to feel good about themselves. In the 3M Coaching Series *Getting Started in Coaching*, the Coaching Association of Canada (CAC) recommends that coaches help children develop confidence and self-esteem through the following ways:

1. Greet each child individually when they arrive for each session. Make them feel good about being there.
2. Show confidence in their ability to learn.
3. Offer activities that suit their level of development.
4. Encourage effort without always focusing on results.
5. Avoid elimination games and other activities that may add undue pressure. Create situations where there are lots of successes.
6. Be specific when telling them what you like about their effort or performance.
7. Use a smile, a nod, or a wink to acknowledge them.
8. Praise them for special things they have done. A 'pat on the back' means a lot.
9. Give them responsibilities. Involve them in making decisions and give each of them a chance to be a 'leader'. Alternate captains.
10. Ask them for their input and invite their questions.

When young people have fun and enjoy their experiences in sport, they stay involved longer and their self-esteem grows. In a video and pamphlet produced by the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport and the CAC, called *Coaching the Spirit of Sport: Building Self-Esteem*, parents, coaches, and teachers are shown how common sport scenes such as cutting athletes from the team or providing constructive feedback at practice can have a powerful effect upon a young person's self-image. The material, developed in consultation with Dr. Terry Orlick, also illustrates how to give constructive feedback after a win or loss. For example:

"Win or lose, positive feedback is extremely valuable. As you and the athletes enjoy the victory, point out the things that went well, identify areas for improvement, and help them draw out lessons as building blocks for future success."

"Following a loss, acknowledge an honest effort, highlight the positives, and ask the athletes to identify areas for improvement. Help them understand that a loss is an important learning experience and that their value as a person does not depend on whether they win or lose."