

INSTITUTE FOR CHRISTIAN TEACHING

STRATEGIES FOR DEVELOPING SELF-ESTEEM  
AMONG ELEMENTARY SCHOOL GOING CHILDREN

BY

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## PREFACE

Southern Asia Faith and Learning Seminar turned to be a great success. This type of seminar is new to us and its insights are interesting. I am happy that Seventh-day Adventists are changing their attitudes and their outlook in integrating Faith and Learning with the lives of people in spreading the Good News to others. Behind success there are always a few persons who work very hard. I like to thank them, Dr. Rashi, the excellent and popular teacher, Dr. Akers, the Technical helper, and Dr. Donna Habenicht, Dr. Woolford and Dr. Berry Hill<sup>for</sup> their able guidance.

I am also grateful to Dr. J. Fowler for presenting world view and his contributions. I also want to thank Southern Asia for organizing this seminar.

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INTRODUCTION

The approach in this paper is done with the view in mind that elementary school going children would develop a positive selfconcept as they are growing up to meet the future demands which are placed upon them by the peers, school teachers, parents and the family members. Each of these agencies have a particular life-style and expect the child to behave accordingly. They are expected to meet the demands of the society. In return, the society expects from them a certain type of behaviour. The transformation of those traits, behaviours, and habits takes place by reading the Bible, listening to the stories told by the teachers, reading religious books and living in a good moral conducive environment of the school. Also following the steps of Jesus Christ to bring the change in their lives.

I have worked with the young children for number of years. Some of the children who come to us with different social and ethnic backgrounds, some come to us from city and the nearby villages. The environment plays a great role in shaping their personality and behaviour. Of course, parents can give no help because they do not know just how to give assistance to their growing children. Parents cannot transmit any of their good habits upon their children because they have to go to work by 7:00 a.m. and return home late in the evening. Generally, the evening is occupied with marketing, cooking food and doing household and necessary chores.

Whatever the habits of the parents are contrary to the physical

law, the injury is done to the future generation. We as teachers wait patiently for the transformation to take place in the hearts of the young children. In return the changes will make them a good citizens of this world and the world to come. With these concept in mind the author has chosen the following topic: "The Strategies for Developing Self-Esteem Among Elementary School Going Children."

"Upon all parents there rests the obligation of giving physical, mental, and spiritual instruction. It should be the object of every parent to secure to his child a well-balanced, symmetrical character. ... A right foundation must be laid, a framework, strong and firm, erected, and then day by day the work of building, polishing, perfecting, must go forward." White, Counsels to Teachers, p. 107.

"Higher than the highest human thought can reach is God's ideal for His children:... He who co-operates with the divine purpose in imparting to the youth a knowledge of God, and molding the character into harmony with His, does a high and noble work. As he awakens a desire to reach God's ideal, he presents an education that is as high as heaven and as broad as the universe; an education that cannot be completed in this life, but that will be continued in the life to come; an education that secures to the successful student his passport from the preparatory school of earth to the higher grade, the school above." White, Education, p. 19

"The instructions given in childhood will follow them all through life." White, Child Guidance, p. 175

Purpose of this Study:

The purpose of this paper is to help children develop a positive self-concept which is in accordance with God's design.

Jesus had a special place for the children in his heart. He gave extra attention to the children. When he was in the crowd he told his disciples, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these." Matthew 19:14.

Paul in his book to Corinthians (13:11) describes the child, "When I was a child I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man I put away the childish ways behind me. Now we see but a poor reflection, then we shall see face to face."

Paul observed himself as the world sees him as a normal child but when he grew up, he could see the love of God's character through himself. This change is brought just because of God's love for him.

Self-concept deals with the idea how the child sees himself as a person with the genuine self-consciousness. He can recognize certain characteristics as he acts and behaves. He makes positive statements, 'I am a good boy' or 'I am the nicest boy in the whole school,' etc. Thus he is able to perform according to his age level-appropriate developmental tasks.

A child sees himself as a person in order to see himself as good Christian he must develop a Christian world view. This will enable a child to develop Christian values and he shall see himself not only as the best boy but also a good Christian boy.

The term self-worth deals with his values. Values can be learned. It is the measurement of self with the standard set by others. Values are the basis for the inner direction of the individual or the price attached by the individual to a given situation. Being affirmed as a person of value, or being cherished and respected values.

Self-worth concept deals with the values he holds which are learned at home and at school. If at school he is able to develop a Christian world view. He shall measure himself not only with others but with the standards set by God. This will enable the child to co-operate rather than compete. God plus you makes the whole person. God's sacrifice for you equals worth.

The term self-esteem employed by Maslow describes the individual's desire for others to hold him in high esteem, or to maintain a high opinion about him.

We could also say that a person's desire to hold very high esteem of others. This should be controlled by Christian view point. So that his self-esteem is based on Christ rather than opinion of his peers.

When you suspect a negative self-concept in a child, try to find out if the child is lacking in any of the above components. Look at them one by one, and find ways to help him to cope with the deficiencies.

"More important than precept are the relations between teachers and pupils. Pupils will identify with teachers whom they like and admire. The teacher wields influence by what she is and does; that is, by what she stands for, what she approves of, what she holds valuable and honorable." Symonds, in Baller, p. 609

STRATEGIES1. Building Child's Self-Esteem:

One of the greatest gifts a teacher can give her children is self-esteem. This precious sense of personal worth can provide her children with the inner strength to survive and the hazards of growing up.

To develop a sense of self-worth can affect the child's self-image in future life and thus it will enable him to make adjustments in his behaviour to his life style. He can make adjustments in dealing with his peers and the adults. Thus he can change his attitude towards his future actions.

God has placed so much value on our lives, then how much more the teacher must value the children who are placed under her care! The reputation of the dress designer determines the value of a garment as a seamstress sews her label on it. So does God. He sews His loving label in every heart. He brings close to His life, and by His providential care we have the eternal value. What a challenge to a teacher to uphold that precious value!

Ellen White tells, "We must deal honestly and faithfully with our children. Work bravely and patiently. Fear no crosses, spare no time or labour, burden or suffering. The future of your children will testify the character of your work. Fidelity to Christ on your part can be better expressed in the symmetrical character of your children than in any other way. They are Christ's property, bought with His own blood."

--Child Guidance, p. 170

## 2. Examine your own Values:

A sizeable portion of a child's self-concept emerges from the way he thinks how you see him. He also can detect your unspoken attitudes. When the child is convinced that he is loved and respected by his parents, he is inclined to accept his own worth as a person.

Many children know that they are loved by the adults and parents but they do not believe they are held in high esteem by them. A child can know that you would give your life for him, yet detect doubts about his acceptability. You feel uncomfortable when the child speaks to guests in your home. One of the parents butt in to explain what he was trying to say, or laugh when the child's remarks sound foolish.

Parents need to guard what they say in the presence of their children. Parents often consult the psychologist, concerning their children and their problems. Mother might tell others about the child's gritty details the object of this conversation is standing near by listening to a candid description of all his faults. How would the child feel when he listens to his parents criticize him !

The parents should include children in the conversation and activities in the house. They can help in the household chores also.

The teacher will more or less hold the above values to be important along with hers. Teacher can instill values for the Bible, which is the fundamental foundation. The stories in the Bible can be applied to his life. The child can appreciate the wonderful and beautiful life of Jesus. It says the Bible is the rule of life, teaching us good character and prepare one for the future life.



### 3. Help Your Child to Compensate:

One of the teacher's task will be to serve as confidentially encouraging when children feel distressed, or have fear of threats which are hard to overcome. Every child must face them and try to overcome those problems and weakness. Teacher recognizes, and encourages and gives rewards for the positive attitudes. Although teachers will be careful not to foster mere conformity, they will make a conscious effort to 'catch children doing good.' She will commend her children for their positive attitude and good behaviour as frequently as possible, both in private and in public. In addition, children will show their confidence in doing assignments thus increasing responsibilities until the child feels confident in himself.

One of the tool the child learns to compensate is to counter balance his weaknesses by capitalizing on his strength. It will be teacher's work to find his strong points.

Perhaps he might be good in maths, teacher can encourage him to do his maths well or if he is good in learning skills which can be learned with his hands. It is always better to learn proper skills and get right kind of knowledge for that skill. It is risky to send a child into adolescent<sup>ce</sup> with no skill, no unique knowledge, no means of compensating. He must be able to say I may not be the most popular student in school, but I am the best trumpet player in the band !

### 4. Discipline with Love:

It will be useful to look first, at the stymology of the word 'discipline.' It derives from the latin verb 'discere,' which means "to

learn", and is therefore related to the word discipline, literally, "someone who is learning or has learned."

Punishment for the transgressing of a rule, regulation, norm or policy for example, "She receives the discipline socially." Always be prayerful while giving punishment to children. Overprotection will stop his responsibility as adulthood which lacks sense of direction moral concepts are overlooked which brings his downfall and destruction. A child should be encouraged to progress on an orderly timetable, at the level of responsibility appropriate for his age.

Each year child should make his own decisions. A seven-year old, for example must be capable of selecting his own clothes for the day. He should know how to keep himself tidy. An overly protective parent allows the child to fall behind his normal timetable. The child falls behind and <sup>A</sup> has no responsibility to make up his mind to do some of the duties at home. When he grows he will still fall behind his peers and thus the conflict begins at home.

Parents and teachers must discipline the children with respect. Does punishment particularly spanking, break the spirit of a child? The answer depends on the manner and intent of the person responsible for giving the punishment.

A spanking, in response to willful defiance, is a worth while tool, but in corporal punishment there is no excuse for taking out one's frustration on the children. There is no need of punishment in front of others, or treat the children with disrespect.

It is important to recognize however, that one way to damage self-

esteem is to avoid punishment altogether. Parents and <sup>e</sup>teachers are to consider the symbols of justice and order. They must be watchful that some of the harmful habits are not overlooked by teachers who love their children. The habits are learned in the early years of life. In a few years the children will grow into adolescence and they have to face their peers.

The counsel comes to us from Mrs. White that, "God's method of government is an example of how children are to be trained. There is not oppression in the Lord's service and there is to be no oppression in the home, or in the school. Yet neither parents nor teachers should allow disregard of their word to pass unnoticed.... Let them be sparing of censure. Let kindness be the law of the home, and of the school. Let the children be taught to keep the law of the Lord, and let a firm, loving influence restrain them from evil." - White, Counsels to Teachers, p. 155.

We the parents and the teachers are counseled by divine message from the pen of Mrs. White that, "It is the privilege of every one to so live that God will approve and bless them. You may be hourly in communion with heaven; it is not <sup>the</sup> will of your heavenly Father that you should ever be under condemnation and darkness. It is not pleasing to God that you should cultivate self-respect by living so that you will be approved by your own conscience, and before men and angels. It is not an evidence of true humility that you go with your head bowed down, and your heart filled with thought of 'self'. It is your privilege to go to Jesus and be cleansed, and to stand before the law without shame and remorse... white -

- R & H (March 27, 1888).

### 5. Help Your Child Compete:

The parents and teachers know that child is forced to compete in this world who worships those attitudes. It can be said by the parents, "I can give you only our opinion that we are obligated to help our child to compete in this world as best he can. If his teeth are crooked, we will see that they are straightened. If he flounders academically, we will seek tutorial assistance. We are allies in his fight for survival.

Here are some hints that will be helpful for the child to survive in this world of competition:

1. Encourage the child to set the goals for himself.
2. Teacher could make the progress chart in the class, so that the child will know just where he stands in his class. This will help him to progress academically.
3. The teacher can give group activities where the child can work with the clever children and build proper confidence in himself.
4. The parents and the teachers can encourage the child to keep his own progress chart, so he can improve by his ownself.
5. The praise and encouragement can lead the child in the path of success.

Every child is not the same to use the above suggestions. Individual help is needed by the teachers who already has the enough knowledge about them. But while helping the child to compete he also must show the true values of life as love for the mankind, integrity, truthfulness, and devotion to God. These values are the keys for his success in life.

Paul says, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course. I have kept the faith; Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing." 2 Tim. 4:7, 8. Here Paul has competed in the race and he acquired victory for what he had been trying to finish.

#### 6. Keeping An Eye On The Classroom:

One of the most important task of the teacher is to make sure that every child in her class knows to read. The child must learn to read at the end of his second year in the school. Self-esteem has been assassinated more frequently over reading problem than <sup>any</sup> other aspect of the school life.

Reading is the basic tool for all the learning. Teachers must pay a special attention to help the child to build the sound foundations for reading:

1. Tutorial help can pull a child through a rough spot academically.
2. Sometimes change of school or teacher in the school can be the best solution to help the child.
3. Sometimes there is a need of giving reading readiness tests which are made for the kindergarten schools. These will determine whether the child has the necessary knowledge or skills to begin reading. When the teacher determines the problem then she can begin the procedure for the group and start right from the beginning in reading.
4. The child's mental-cognitive consideration can be helpful to

determine his preferred learning style. Many prefer a good model or visuals and others prefer involvement in reading. Still others may physically involved through writing by their fingers.

5. The most important factor is the child's general health. This involves his proper nourishment, sleep and temperamental aspect and some characteristics which requires special handling. The two physical factors that influence reading success are vision and hearing. The professional help is needed to overcome these problems.
6. The slow learner is more likely to have self-esteem problems. The parent's help is required. Both the teacher and parents can emphasize academic achievement. The child accomplishes<sup>e</sup><sub>es</sub> little even he tries many times, but the teacher can tone down to help the child in doing his lessons. The parents should not demand too much from such children expecting him to be famous scholar over night. Let him learn at his own speed.
7. The teacher cannot make the average children a genius child. Therefore the educational evaluation plays a great role in the school. It becomes an integral part of the instructional program to provide information which serves as a basis for a variety of educational decision. The teacher should give some additional help to make him better achiever according to his abilities.
8. Many physical factors or surroundings have an effect on

learning. The noise around the class room, proper light fittings, ventilation in the room, odors, color of walls, unnecessary activities, room space and placement of materials are elements that can be juggled to create a productive learning environment.

There is counsel from the Lord when we do our best for the individual child the rest is left with the Lord: "Not that we are in any way confident of our own resources -- our ability comes from God. It is He who makes us competent administrators of the new agreement, and we deal not in the letter but in the Spirit of God can give life to the soul." 2 Cor. 3:5,6.

#### 7. Avoid Overprotection:

An overly protective parent allows the child to fall behind his normal timetable of growth in motor activities. As eight year old child may find it hard to play baseball with his peers because he is not allowed to play for getting injured in the game. His parents had to decide all the physical games for him. When the time comes to make any decisions he had to depend upon the adults.

The overly protective parents will not allow his child to choose any of his clothing. They even may not allow him to choose any furnitures for his room. The parents has to make all the decisions for him.

The child may make the mess in the house, to avoid a mess in the house the parents do all the things, like feeding, bathing and the like. The parents think that the child may get hurt if <sup>he</sup> does himself. Parents even  
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accompany the child to the playground to protect him from accidents.

The young child must meet all the problems himself, so that his success and failure will set a pattern for later responses. It is also observed that his attitudes are well established early in life. The child should be given opportunity to choose his own things, he may make mistakes or he may choose wrong colors for his toys, but soon he will realize by looking at his peers that he chose the wrong colors for his clothings. He will begin to look around and learn quickly. He must be given chance to perform or take some responsibilities according to his level of maturity and age.

"A child who is burdened with emotional difficulties apparently does not have as much freedom as a more serene child to develop ideas of his own concerning<sup>n</sup> right and wrong. He is less able to make allowances for human frailty and, in his misery, he is more likely than happy child to be punitive rather than comp<sup>a</sup>ssionate in passing judgment on the misdeeds of others." Jersild, p. 412.

"The emotional attitude is the functional unit of personality. The type of personality, the kind of character, the health of mind of the individule, will depend upon the emotional attitudes developed. Some emotional attitudes are functionally unhealthy; some are decidedly wholesome... The emotional attitude is not in itself inherited. It is a learned response adopted to satisfy inherited urges. It can be changed if other means of satisfying these urges can be found.... It is vitally important which attitudes we develop." Ligon, p. 13-14



CONCLUSION

These above traits are only a few of the components of building positive self-concept among the children. There is always modelling goes on as interaction takes place. Children watch the grownup people, they also watch other children. They pick up those traits from them to discover how challenging and quite competitive to cope with. The child gets the idea that he is different and thinks about himself that he has been listening to parents who care for him, learns to develop an ongoing relationship with Jesus and depend upon Him. Faith and integration takes place.

Parents and teachers are to bring the children in prayer for He has made it possible for them to learn religion as they learn to frame the words of the language. <sup>white -</sup> -Adventist Home, p. 513.

Formation of attitudes and emotional tones of life is important during the stage of young children have sensitive feelings, a high susceptibility to impressions; feelings are present and develop before judgement. Attitudes towards parents become attitudes toward God.

"Children must be drawn toward heaven, not harshly, but very gently." - White, Gospel Worker, P. 209

"With our limited powers we are to be as holy in our sphere as God is holy in His sphere. To the extent of our ability, we are to make manifest the truth and love and excellence of the divine character."

-White, 1 Selected Messages, p. 337

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