

I CAN DO IT!

by Holly Scherer

We all need someone to cheer us on every now and then — especially when we get discouraged. Here's an idea to help your children build their self esteem. Provide them with a lifetime tool on how to be their own cheerleader when life gets them down. As mothers we need to give our children as many tools as possible to survive, because we won't always be around to pat them on the back and say "you can do it."

Make an "I CAN....." book with your children. Here's how:

1. Make or find any notebook (spiral is easiest). There are many journal books out there to choose from. A simple spiral notebook will do. Personalize the book; make it special by decorating the cover. The title page will be "I CAN..."
2. In this special book write down (or have your child write if they are old enough to write) in a list or bullet format anything your child can do. I call it an accomplishment list. It doesn't matter what age you begin. Just begin the process. You can start when your child is a baby or teenager (or for your older loved ones – more about this later).
3. Record all the milestones your baby makes, like: drinks from a bottle by themselves, rolls over, walks by himself, smiles at the doggy, has a dry diaper all night, poo-poops in the potty, puts his own socks on, shares a toy with his sister, takes turns on the swing with her friend, writes his name, puts her jacket on by herself, ties his shoes by himself, received his 5 year old shots without screaming. Got an A on her spelling test. Won the potato sack race at the annual picnic. Keep the list going over the years. You get the idea.

Use this special book to build your child's self esteem and to give them a tool to use when things get tough. When your child comes to you and says "but I CAN'T do it," your first response should always be "yet". "You can't do it...yet." Assure him that maybe he can't do something now, but with practice, more patience, or when he has more experience, he will be able to do it successfully. Then if your child is still discouraged, pull out the "I CAN book." Review with him all the things he has been able to master, write down any new items he has been able to master, and assure him there is no doubt he will be able to master other things in the future.

This is also a great gift idea for a loved one. I gave one to my mother on Mother's Day. I got the idea after hearing her say in casual conversation that she had not accomplished much in her life. Well that is absolutely not true! She is an amazing woman. I wrote down everything I could think of that she had done in her life, from her challenging childhood, to her teaching baton lessons, the unconditional love she gave her children, being a loving and supportive wife, her spiritual growth, all of her professional advances in the banking industry.

Once I started writing I found it hard to stop. I titled my list “The amazing accomplishments of Helen.” Talk about a gift that was well received! It gave my mother something to look back and say “wow, I did all that?!” We are all amazing and we all do amazing things – start your list today. See the power of saying, “yes I can!”

(Note from Kathie: Holly and I both believe in the power of keeping one of these accomplishment books for ourselves as well. When we think of it we write down things we’ve accomplished. We include cards or notes from others when they appreciate us for something we’ve done. That way, when you are having a bad day, maybe feeling overwhelmed by all the things that are “yet to be done,” it helps to look through these to remind yourself that you are “already quite wonderful, just the way you are.” And to remind yourself that if you managed to do all of these amazing things, yes, you will learn to do that new task you’ve taken on. “Yes, you can!”)

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