

# Parent Handbook

## Increasing Self-Esteem



### Purpose.

Children's self-esteem and feelings of competence are vital for both their personal growth and their educational success. Children who (1) feel that they are respected (by peers and adults), and (2) feel good about themselves, are likely to learn more and behave better in the classroom. Further, if children feel good about themselves and about school, they are more likely to be motivated and persistent in their schoolwork.

### The PATHS<sup>®</sup> Kid for Today.

In the PATHS Curriculum, there is a daily activity that is intended to increase children's self-esteem, as well as to help make PATHS more fun. This activity is called the PATHS Kid for Today and it continues throughout the school year.

Each day, a different child will be chosen to be the PATHS Kid, and every child will have an equal number of turns. The PATHS Kid will have two special roles:

1. During the PATHS lesson, the PATHS Kid will be my special assistant. This will involve helping me with materials, demonstrations, and so forth.
2. At the end of the lesson or school day, the PATHS Kid will receive a series of compliments in the following manner: First, I will give the PATHS Kid a compliment. Then the PATHS Kid will pick two children (from among those who have their hands raised) to give him or her a compliment. Finally, the PATHS Kid will give himself or herself a compliment (will say something that he or she is proud of or likes about him- or herself). I will write down these compliments on a Compliment List, which the child will get to keep and take home.

Before this activity starts, the children will learn about compliments. They will discuss what a compliment is and will talk about different types of compliments that people can give. The types of compliments they will review will include:

- (1) things that people do (for example, "You run fast.")
- (2) things people have (for example, "I like your bicycle.")
- (3) the way people look (for example, "I like your hair.")
- (4) the way people are (for example, "You're a good friend.")
- (5) the way people behave (for example, "I like how well you listen," "You're good at sharing"), and so forth.

The children will also discuss what people can say when someone gives them a compliment (for example, "thank you") and how people feel when they receive a compliment (for example, sometimes proud and happy, sometimes embarrassed, and so forth).

At the beginning of PATHS, children are sometimes awkward both in giving and in accepting compliments. In addition, their compliments are usually short and concrete (for example, "I like your shirt"). Over time, however, children show increased confidence in giving compliments, as well as genuine pride in receiving them. Their compliments also become increasingly personal and abstract. For example, one child, who was usually shy, gave herself the following compliment: "I believe in myself!"

## What You Can Do at Home:

1. Ask your child, "Who was the PATHS Kid today?"
2. Encourage your child to bring home his or her Compliment List when he or she is the PATHS Kid (your child should always know at least one day ahead of time whether or not he or she is going to be the PATHS Kid for the following lesson.) Read the Compliment List with your child and add a compliment of your own. If you and your child feel comfortable about it, display the Compliment List in a place where others can see it (for example, on the refrigerator).
3. Remember to give your child compliments and explain why you think these things.
4. Some families like to start their own compliment time. For example, in some families, the family members exchange compliments every night after dinner. In other families, compliments are given by each member at the dinner table one night each week.

# Parent Handbook



## Self-Control and the Turtle Technique

### Purpose.

Learning how to control our behaviors is important at all ages, but is especially difficult for young children. Having self-control is especially challenging when we are feeling strong emotions. Children often express strong feelings through physical acts such as hitting, kicking, throwing things, screaming, running around, and so forth.

To help children stop and think before acting, it is important to teach them to use effective means of self-control. In other words, when children are upset they need to calm down before they can think and behave maturely.

### Skill: The Turtle Technique.

During PATHS® Time, we recently read “The Turtle Story,” and then acted it out. As you know, this story is about a little turtle who wants to do well in school, but who often gets into trouble because he doesn’t stop and think. Little Turtle knows that he has a problem, but he doesn’t know what to do about it. Then one day, Little Turtle is befriended by Wise Old Turtle, who teaches him that when he is feeling strong feelings, he can go into his shell and follow three easy steps to help him calm down and think. After he feels calmer, then he can come out of his shell and work on solving his problems. Little Turtle tries this and finds that it works very well for him.

Today we began to practice using the Turtle Technique at school. We call this “Doing Turtle.” “Doing Turtle” means folding our arms and going into our “shells.” Then we follow three steps to calm down:

1. We tell ourselves to “STOP.”
2. We take one long, deep breath.
3. We say the problem and how we feel.

By folding their arms and following the three steps, the children will practice a specific way that helps them to control their behavior.

I will encourage the children to “Do Turtle” on their own whenever they feel upset or whenever they have a problem during the school day. When they fold their arms and follow the three steps, it will be a signal to me that they are having a problem. After they have calmed down, I will talk to them about the problems and help them think about what they can do to solve them.

Of course, "Doing Turtle" is only one method for having self-control. We will continue to use Turtle during the school year, but we will also discuss and learn other ways to stop and calm down in future PATHS lessons.

## What You Can Do at Home:

1. Ask your child if he or she remembers the Turtle Story. Discuss the idea of how important it is to calm down so that we can solve our problems and feel better.
2. Praise your child whenever he or she remembers to do "Turtle" and to calm down. Then ask him or her if he or she wants to talk about the problem and discuss what he or she could do to solve it.
3. When your child looks frustrated or upset, has difficulty calming down, or doesn't show good self-control and he or she forgets to do "Turtle," remind him or her that "maybe now is a good time to 'Do Turtle.'" Then praise him or her when he or she does it.
4. Have your child explain "Turtle" to other family members and encourage everyone in the family to "Do Turtle" (parents included!).
5. Ask your child to color in the "Remember to Do Turtle" Graphic and put it up on your refrigerator or other convenient location as a reminder to use it.