

## Parenting Your Child Effectively: Help Children Feel Lovable and Capable

Marilyn S. Fox, Extension Educator

### Guidance Principle

This publication explains ways parents can build a child's self-esteem. This is a part of a series of 10 "Parenting Your Child Effectively" guides.

*Help your children feel lovable and capable.* In this discussion, a person's feeling of being lovable and capable is referred to as an IALAC (I am lovable and capable). An IALAC is a little bit like your spirit or sense of humor—no one can see it, but it's an important part of who you are. People need a big, strong IALAC to be able to love others, accept and receive love and feel good about themselves. Your IALAC gets bigger or smaller because of what happens to you. IALAC is another word for self-esteem.

Sometimes we need something right now to help us calm an emotional discussion with our children. When things are difficult, we are most likely to "lose our cool" and say or do things that we wish later we hadn't. We need something that settles the conflict without either the child or the parent feeling put down. There are a number of guidance principles that help us discipline in stressful times.

Following are ways parents can build a child's self-esteem.

Situation	Hurtful Response	Constructive Response
Mark spills the juice he is carrying to the table.	"Can't you ever do anything right?"	"That's a hard job. We'll wipe it up and you can try again."
Katie cries because she can't open the lid on the peanut butter jar.	"You're too little to do that — let me do it for you!"	"Let's see if we can do it together."
Three-year-old Miguel runs away from you in the grocery store.	"What the matter with you, Miguel? You're acting like a baby! I thought you were a big boy!"	
Keasha cries at bedtime because she is afraid of the dark.	"You ought to be ashamed. You're acting like a baby. There's nothing to be scared of."	

### Acknowledgment

This fact sheet series contains guidelines to help parents interact with their children. It was reformatted from NebGuide G991 (Revised May 1997) written by Herbert G. Lingren, Extension Family Life Specialist.

UNL Extension publications are available online at <http://extension.unl.edu/publications>.

**Index: Family Life  
Parenting**  
Issued July 2007

Extension is a Division of the Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln cooperating with the Counties and the United States Department of Agriculture.

University of Nebraska–Lincoln Extension educational programs abide with the nondiscrimination policies of the University of Nebraska–Lincoln and the United States Department of Agriculture.

© 2007, The Board of Regents of the University of Nebraska on behalf of the University of Nebraska–Lincoln Extension. All rights reserved.