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Growing Self-Confidence

By: Mary Fagan

Children can be very critical of themselves, but remember that old adage: Children learn what they live? We all make mistakes, but it's what happens after the "you-know-what" hits the fan that really matters. I have had lots of practice and many splatters to clean up after. As a result, my kids have had heaps of learning to grow on.

This fertile ground of my imperfections has yielded these seven lessons for personal growth and the building of self-confidence even when things seem to be falling apart:

1. **Learn from your mistakes.** Talk about them in an intelligent and understanding way. For example, when I backed through the garage door, I told my children that I learned to look behind me before going in reverse. I might have been tempted to yell at their father for closing the door and not telling me, but that wouldn't guaranty that he wouldn't do it again. The best thing was for me to do was what I was supposed to do in the first place. We needed a new garage door anyway.

2. **Recognize change: Name it and claim it.** That is growth and it should be celebrated. My whole family celebrated the first time I admitted I was wrong. It was just this year and what a party it was!

3. **Listen to advice.** It's tough and we are all stubborn. Of course, I can't imagine where my kids got that from but there is another genetically responsible party involved, and I've advised him it's his fault. Thankfully he listens to my advice.

4. **Be persistent.** If at first you don't succeed, try, try again. Why don't we pay more attention to

those old clichés? I like to point out how well this works for me when hounding my children to keep their rooms clean.

5. **Don't call yourself names.** That inner tape recorder needs to be erased and re-dubbed with messages like, I am smart enough to learn that lesson" or I won't repeat that performance." Don't call yourself dumb" or stupid" you just learned not to lie to your parents because they aren't as dumb as you think and they caught you.

6. **Prepare as best you can.** If you failed the test, perhaps you should have studied? Not exactly rocket science but some people just love to count on Lady Luck, and she is very stingy. When my litter needs proof of this, I use visual examples. I send them to my car to count the number of scratched off lotto tickets smashed in between the seats and in my purse. Bingo!

7. **Be realistic.** Instant successes are as scarce as hen's teeth. And for those of you who don't live in the country, hens don't have teeth. Losing 20 pounds in 7 days was just unrealistic and it taught my kids how grumpy a person can be when they set unrealistic goals. (I heard the reunion was boring anyway.)

Mary Fagan has an M.S. in Education and is a mother of three children with the grey hairs to prove it. When not watching them closely, she offers lighthearted parenting humor at <http://motherwise.us>.