

Questions & Answers

Q: My older daughter is in junior high school. She is a good student and talented athlete—learning and sports have always come easily to her. My younger daughter is in third grade and is quite different from her sister. She has some learning challenges and is not athletic at all. She has begun to compare herself to her older sister and always says, “I’m the failure in this family.” How can I help her realize that she isn’t a failure and that we love her just the way she is?

A: Younger siblings often feel like they’re running to catch up. But with your love and support, your younger daughter can find ways to grow into her own special self—and improve her grades at the same time!

Research consistently shows that positive self-esteem is linked to higher school achievement. And the best way to give your child’s self-esteem a boost is to discover some areas where she can be successful. Success in one area truly does lead to success in another.

What are your child’s interests? If her sister is an accomplished soccer player, maybe she should try a different sport. Or maybe she’d be happier playing an instrument or acting in a school play. Help her find activities that are different from her sister’s and that will give her an opportunity to shine on her own.

Point out the things your child does well. Whether it’s her sense of style or her kindness to others, remind her that these are important—and that you are just as proud of those achievements as you are of her sister’s soccer goals.

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