

Human Potential: How Parents Can Maximize It In Their Child

by Kathy Mangold

As parents and as a society, we have high hopes and dreams for our children's achievements. What achievements is a child – your child – capable of when the doors to success have been opened?

My name is Kathy Mangold and I'm a parent of three, past editor of MetroParent - Milwaukee's parenting magazine - and, for five years I've worked with an organization focused on developing a child's full potential.

In both my home and in my professional life, I've witnessed the real transformation that takes place when a child "plugs in" to their full human potential. It impacts them in their interactions with friends, family, schoolmates and teachers. Quite simply, it makes everything better.

Through these experiences I have perfected some **simple methods for maximizing human potential** that I want share with you in this report.

I'm assuming you requested this report because you suspect your child may not be living up to his or her capabilities. If that's the case, then this report may be the most valuable thirteen pages you've ever read.

In my opinion, nothing is more important than fully developing the potential of our nation's children. Therefore, I hope you internalize the messages within this report and are able to apply its teachings to your children.

Read on to see how simple – and how successful – these techniques have been for unlocking potential and changing the lives of children just like yours.

Matthew: Angry and unfocused

"Everyone hates me. No one will play with me," 5-year-old Matthew sobbed as he sat in the corner of the day care center.

Wanting a bright future for their son but, instead, coping with an unhappy child who didn't fit in, his parents asked themselves how they could best help Matthew. In their research they found us and, after learning how other parents with similar issues had achieved amazing results, they decided to work with us.

Within a few short weeks, Matthew's parents noticed their son was learning to "focus his energy and action. He was able to do many things that were not possible before."

And, best of all, **Matthew began to enjoy school and participate in group activities.**

Over the years, we've literally seen hundreds of children like Matthew – kids who are having problems in school, who seem shy, who don't behave, who have a short attention span, or who can't get along with others. Often parents have tried many programs before finding us, **but these programs didn't work because they didn't deal with the underlying cause of their child's behavior issues.**

But, with our methods, dramatic changes occur. Their grades improve, they make friends easier, they cooperate more with adults, and they begin to maximize the potential they have inside themselves.

And, best of all, they are happier. All at once, **the future looks very bright.**

Every parent's goal

Over the years, I've learned that every parent wants the very best for their children.

They know their children will face many challenges during their school-age years – such as feelings of inferiority, peer pressure, the temptations of drugs and alcohol, and feeling “out of touch” with their parents. That's why parents of even very young children start to worry about whether their children will walk out the door at 18 years of age as **independent, responsible individuals who are ready to be successful in life.**

Many parents tell me it keeps them awake at night – the fear of how to give their children the skills to face the rigors of life.

The problem is that most parents don't know how to make this goal a reality. They are bombarded with such a broad range of confusing theories on how to be a successful parent, they don't know what to do and often just end up imitating the practices of their own parents.

Frankly, I get angry at all of the nonsense, half-truths, and empty ideas about success that actually create roadblocks for children to reach their full potential.

The single source of almost all child behavioral difficulties

Through my experience, I've become 100% convinced there is **one source of almost all child behavior difficulties.**

Just one.

If we could, somehow eliminate this single source of trouble, I'm absolutely sure our nation's children would have far greater self-discipline, focus and concentration, assurance in dealing with new situations and people, and overall success in life.

In fact, if we could eliminate this source from the adult human population, I'm 100% convinced our planet's overall output would increase by no less than a factor of ten. We would see far greater economic growth, less political strife, more innovation and higher levels of happiness.

So, what is this single source? **What one thing could possibly have this kind of impact?**

Actually, I bet you already know what it is, because it's most likely limiting your own potential in life and is possibly contributing to the parenting style that may be basis for whatever behavior difficulties your child is having.

What am I talking about? ---- **poor self esteem.**

Yes, if you want to address your child's behavioral difficulties you absolutely **MUST** work on his or her level of self esteem (and, likely, as well – yours).

When I talk about self esteem, I am not just referring to self confidence. I am also talking about how your child views him- or herself. We all have an inner view and voice that tells us what we can – and cannot -- do. That inner voice dictates whether we will be successful.

So having a poor self esteem is more than just lacking in self confidence.

Rachael: Sassy and struggling

Let me re-emphasize this point – **low self esteem is the bane of human potential. Period.**

Nothing else even comes close in creating limits to what children and adults can accomplish in life.

Therefore, it's critical that parents understand the cause of low self esteem and what can be done about it.

Let me tell you about Rachael.

A few years ago the parents of this seven year old came to us in search of some answers. Rachael was struggling in school and didn't show much respect for her parents. Her parents told me that she had trouble focusing on her homework and often talked back to them when they tried to encourage her.

It didn't take us long to realize that Rachael's problem was a low self esteem and that her parents were contributing to the problem via their parenting style, an odd amalgamation of how each of them were brought up by their parents.

We did some work directly with Rachael and provided Rachael's parents with some needed advice on how to use more positive discipline methods.

Within a few weeks, Rachael's parents were ecstatic. Here is the handwritten note I received from them just 24 days after our first meeting:

"Thank you! Your work with Rachael and recommendations for us have literally transformed our family. We got a call yesterday from her teacher asking what was going on. She was actually concerned because she had never seen such a dramatic change in a child in such a short period of time. We told her that there was nothing to worry about and to expect more positive changes going forward. You're the best. Thank you so much!"

Mr. and Mrs. Patton

What made for this dramatic change? Given my comments above, the answer to this question should be obvious – Rachael developed a higher level of self esteem.

Boundless opportunities by raising self esteem

So what can parents do to address the issue of low self esteem – the principal roadblock for their children to realize their full potential? In other words, what can be done to fill their lives with boundless opportunities?

Does that sound like a worthwhile goal? I said above that all parents "hope their children will walk out the door at 18 years of age being independently responsible individuals who are ready to be successful in life." But, why stop there? – when the methods exist to prepare your child to experience a life of *boundless opportunities*.

By now, I hope you are extremely curious as to what these methods are. Because I didn't write this report just have parents read it once, find it interesting, file it away, and then return to their old parenting habits.

No, **I desperately want you to take action on my advice** and I've learned that, for that to happen, I must first get your attention ... and the very best method for getting attention is to create curiosity.

Curiosity causes people to ask questions and, once that happens – amazingly – they are actually quite interested in listening to the answers.

[By the way, I hope you can see how this same approach can be used by you in getting your child to listen.]

So, I want you to be extremely curious about my esteem-raising methods so you'll pay very close attention to what I'm going to tell you in the next few pages.

The secret to developing high self esteem in your child

Here you go – here is the secret to raising your child's self esteem that I've discovered after more than 22 years of research and proven success.

There are three simple steps:

1. Help your child discover activities (or, maybe, just a single activity) they truly love.
2. Make time in your family's busy schedule for them to participate in these activities.
3. Acknowledge, recognize and reward their effort, accomplishments and successes in these activities.

In my extensive experience in working with children of all ages and with a wide variety of behavioral issues, I've found these simple steps extremely powerful – but, sadly, most children rarely experience their extraordinary positive impact.

See, **self esteem comes from achieving real successes doing something you care about.**

Let me say that again.

High self esteem comes from having real successes doing something you care about.

Think about your own situation. If you receive praise for doing something that's not important or interesting to you, it has little psychological impact. Am I right?

But, what if the praise is for something you are passionate about?

Let's say you've been placed on a committee at work for which you have no interest and then receive praise from your boss your exceptional work on that committee. Not a big deal.

But let's say your children are the most important thing in your life (a likely scenario) and you receive a reward from the school for being the best parent in your town or city. Now that's pride!

It's just a law of human nature. **We feel better about ourselves when we are recognized or rewarded for doing something we really care about.**

This law of nature works both ways

But, this law works in the opposite direction also. If we are doing something we love and find important, and then are criticized for our performance, the **impact can be devastating.**

I see this much too often. A child gets involved in an activity they love and an incompetent coach or instructor says something the child interprets as criticism. When this occurs, one of two things is the result:

1. Their performance suffers, which results in more criticism, more performance deterioration, and a drop in self esteem.
2. They quit and lose the opportunity to **have real successes at doing something they care about.**

This second scenario happens far too often in school and organized sports. These programs are so competitive that, by middle school, only the star performers are still participating. This makes me so angry – for three reasons:

1. I just can't believe that a child's sports performance in grade school is an accurate predictor of how they would perform if they stayed with the sport through high school. How many potential superstars are never given the opportunity to nurture their skills?
2. Why should any child who truly loves an activity be refused the opportunity to make small, but consistent, improvements in their performance and experience the resulting self-esteem gains for doing so?
3. Why do we let this happen when the research about the devastating impact of poor self-esteem is so consistent and overwhelming?

What exactly a parents needs to do

When I share the above revelation with parents, sometimes it takes some time for them to fully trust what I'm telling them. But, after more discussion and real-life examples (which I'm unable to provide here due to the limitations of a written report), they ultimately "get it." Once this happens, there next question is almost always "OK, so what exactly are we supposed to do?"

To try to answer that question here, let me provide more details about each of my three simple steps.

1. Help your child discover activities (or, maybe, just a single activity) they truly love.

There is only one way to do this – introduce your child to a variety of activities. This should include experimenting with different hobbies that can be pursued from home, various subjects in school, group activities with other families and organized outside activities.

Then, you should watch your child to see if the activity is something they really enjoy. If it is, then stick with it. If it's not, then try something else. But, be sure to give it enough time. For example, quitting a team mid-season isn't something I'd support. Assess the situation, once your child has given an activity a real chance.

Because of the misgivings stated above, if your child wants to get involved in competitive sports (football, basketball, soccer), I'd actively seek out coaches who understand the value of maintaining a positive atmosphere during the grade- and middle-school years. I'd also suggest balancing these sports with activities that are less competitive and more focused on developing a child's self esteem.

2. Make the time for your child to participate in the identified activities.

This step is a matter of setting priorities. Once you decide what's important, you just need to find time to do those activities and eliminate the ones that are less important.

3. Acknowledge, recognize and reward your child's efforts, accomplishments and successes in the selected activities.

Once you believe your child is participating in activities they truly love, then make a conscious effort to praise them for their efforts, accomplishments and successes, no matter how small.

Your goal should be to promote excellence in at least one area of their life. Sure, your children might be involved in a wide variety of activities but you'll find there are only a few (or, maybe just one) where they rapidly gain self esteem because they love the activity and can see themselves making constant improvements.

The process is simple

Success breeds success, and having your child participate in an activity they enjoy will motivate them to achieve and strive for excellence.

But a child, unless they happen to be Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, will not become a concert pianist after a few lessons. In fact, that shouldn't even be the goal – yet.

Success is built step by step. Here's how it works:

- * Set small and achievable goals. Think of them as building blocks that build muscle (both mental and physical), skill and most of all, confidence.
- * Make sure the activity has a pathway to proficiency. Beginning skiers start on the bunny hills, then work their way up to the green hill, then the blue hills – you get the idea. Eventually, their expertise is honed to the point where they can take on the Double Diamonds. Once they master these most challenging runs, they can start doing competitions. This example illustrates a step-by-step process where the pathway to excellence is clear.
- * Guide your children, but let them work out their own solutions. If they reach an impasse, ask them what is stopping them? Listen, and let them work out their own strategies to reach the next level.

* Always recognize the effort, not just the result. They might not win the competition, but if they did their best and tried their hardest, their effort was a success.

* Encourage big dreams – why not tell them that with hard work and focus, they might, just might – given the skiing example above – become an Olympic skier someday? Dreams and high aspirations are the foundation of human achievement.

In taking this step-by-step approach, keep in mind this basic principle – children cannot develop excellence in doing something they dislike. Therefore, be careful that you are applying these ideas in areas of activity that your child truly loves (rather, for example, in areas you want them to pursue but they don't show much interest).

Something I didn't tell you about myself

In my summary of my background and experience at the beginning of this report, I left one thing out – myself and the team I work with are very involved in martial arts.

Martial arts is a transformative activity for adults and children. I have witnessed the many accomplishments that take place, both as an observer (through the work done by my professional colleagues), and one that have experienced firsthand (my husband, my three kids and I are all martial arts students, too).

With this background you can imagine that I have a bias towards martial arts as an outstanding activity for children to get involved with.

Here is why:

* **Martial arts is all-encompassing way to achieve mental and physical improvement.** If your knowledge of martial arts comes from Bruce Lee movies or televised fights, please realize that this view is narrow in scope. The overwhelming majority of martial arts practitioners employ martial arts techniques and philosophies for self-betterment, not for combat.

* **Martial arts build confidence.** Skills are built upon repetition, and this reinforcement helps hone a student's technique. These confidence-building and skill-reinforcement qualities are two reasons why the Mayo Clinic, for example, recommends martial arts for children with A.D.D. and A.D.H.D.

* **Martial arts has real-life relevance.** Self-defense skills are important, whether a child is confronted by a bully or a dangerous stranger. Techniques must be done with confidence. That is why students are asked to yell in class when they are practicing techniques. It forces students to breathe correctly but more importantly shows the confidence in the technique by how loud and forceful the yell is done.

* **A system of goal-setting is inherently built into martial arts.** Students progress in rank through a progression of colored belts; each of the belts signifies a betterment in technique and attitude. As one moves up in rank, their self esteem is raised because they and everyone else around them can see the growth to a position of greater expertise and leadership.

* **Martial arts possess the ultimate symbol of achievement: earning a black belt.** The rigors along the path toward a black belt reflect the hurdles in real life that one encounters along the path toward excellence. Martial arts students must demonstrate self discipline, persevere through hard training and reach high goals. Once the goal is reached, the black belt become symbolic of excellence in all areas of a child's life.

* **Unlike team sports, martial arts is a personal journey.** You are not compared with others. You go at your own pace.

* **Martial arts elevates students, bringing them out of their comfort zone and into the realm of excellence.** If children are never nudged out of their comfort zone, they don't have the opportunity to grow to the next level of self esteem, that of taking risks, and succeeding. Testing to reach the next belt level, competing in tournaments – these confidence-building opportunities can all be likened to real-life situations – giving a speech or performing in public -- that sadly cripple so many people.

It's for all these reasons that, when I decided to write this report and make it available to parents throughout the United States, I concluded the best way for it to be distributed was through martial arts schools.

Therefore, you probably were made aware of this report as a result of the efforts of a martial arts school in your area that adheres to the principles of human potential I've outlined in this report.

I'm obviously a big believer in martial arts as an activity that can build the self-esteem of many – if not most – children.

However, I also know that children can only develop true excellence in an activity they truly love --- so, as I stated in Step One of my three-step path to high self esteem, you need to help your child discover those activities by introducing him or her to a great variety of them.

I want to make it as easy as possible for you to introduce your child to martial arts. So, here is the arrangement I've made with the martial arts school in your area with whom I've decided to work.

They will provide the following to you and your child:

1. The opportunity to try martial arts firsthand — you, your child and the rest of your family are invited to a private, introductory session
2. The chance to ask questions — you'll want to be sure and get specific details on how that school will build and cultivate self-esteem for your child
3. A trial period to help you assess whether martial arts is an activity suitable to help your child reach his or her personal potential.

To take advantage of this offer, just **contact the martial arts school** from whom you received this report and they will arrange for your initial orientation appointment.

How does that sound?

I sure hope you take advantage of this opportunity. Again, I'm a big believer in martial arts as an exceptional esteem-building activity for children so I really want you to try it out.

If you decide not to, that's certainly fine --- but please don't give up on your pursuit to find an activity or activities for your child that they truly love and, as a result, will cause them to gain the self esteem that comes from making constant improvements in something they care about.

Don't let poor self esteem lock away your child's potential. Enabling them to achieve – to dream big and succeed – will help them realize what maximum potential really means.