

Girls Only

A prevention education toolkit designed to promote self-esteem,
develop life skills, and inspire positive motivation in young girls

Risk-taking and problem solving



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Risk-taking and problem solving

From the earliest age many girls are discouraged from exposing themselves to factors that put their safety at risk. Parents intervene in a girl's activities long before they do with a boy. The level of testosterone flowing through a person's system also increases their willingness to expose themselves to risk-taking.

Girls often like to be sure of a decision before they act on it. Consequently girls are less likely to guess at an answer or solution compared to a boy. Girls do not develop problem-solving solutions as readily as boys.

Problem-solving approaches

Girls and boys are equal in maths till early high school. Gender equity issues have been found to be a significant cause of a girl's belief that she has inferior problem-solving approaches.

Giving girls fluency in times tables and addition when young will boost their confidence as they develop

higher order maths skills. Young girls tend to use counting devices rather than retrieval ability.

Encourage girls to come up with abstract and novel strategies to solve problems.

Focus on process, not product.

Use peer influence. Girls are heavily influenced by their peers. Divide groups of girls who believe that maths is hard or not for them.

Match up poor performers with girls with positive attitudes to maths.

Performance in maths

Girls will take time to compare alternate answers where a boy is willing to guess.

Girls need time to complete tasks including tests.

Girls with verbal skills may need the questions presented orally as well as in written format.

Maths formula drills at an early age assists girls to have confidence later on.

Encourage girls to use alternatives to calculators. This builds confidence in understanding ways to find answers.

Girls can be very competitive with themselves rather than with others.

Encourage a girl to solve issues on her own rather than fixing things for her.

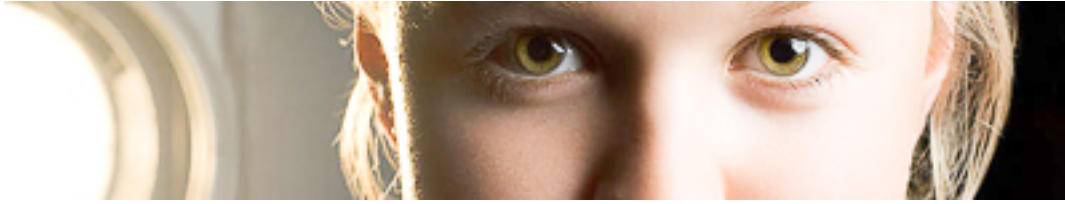
When parents or teachers take over, girls don't develop the coping skills they need to handle situations on their own. Ask a girl to consider three strategies she might use to deal with a situation, and then ask her about the possible outcomes. Let her decide what she wants to do (within reason). Even if you disagree with her choice, you give a girl a sense of control over her life and show her that she is responsible for her decisions.

Encourage her to take physical risks.

“Girls who avoid risks have poorer self-esteem than girls who can and do face challenges,” says JoAnn Deak, Ph.D., author of *Girls Will Be Girls*. “Urge a girl to go beyond her comfort zone — for example, encourage a girl who's scared to ride her bike downhill to find just a small hill to conquer first.” Catherine Steiner-Adair, Ed.D., co-author of *Full of Ourselves: A Wellness Program to Advance Girl Power, Health and Leadership*, agrees. “It's important to help even non-athletic girls develop some physical competence and confidence when they're young. Whether it's through team or individual sports, girls need to form a physical relationship with their body that builds confidence.”

Get girls working together.

Girls who work cooperatively in school or who problem-solve together do much better in taking large risks or facing challenges. These girls report an incredible sense of accomplishment and feeling of competence, both of which give a huge boost to self-esteem. Encourage a girl to participate in team-building activities or join organizations that rely on teamwork.



Two Page Plan – Risk-taking and problem solving

Reflect on circumstances where the girls you teach demonstrate reluctance to problem solve or take acceptable risks.

What tips have you learned in this session that would you would use encouraging healthy risk taking and active problem solving in your classroom

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

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