

I enjoyed every week's discussion topics and learned so much from each one. I chose to compile the discussion from my post in our Chapter 7 & 8 topics that asked this question:

“Thinking specifically about middle childhood, what is sometimes called "the elementary school years," from ages 7-11 years, explore the concept of “self-esteem” in relation to Diana Baumrind's research on parenting styles. How do different parenting styles interact with Erikson's "Industry versus Inferiority"?”

I learned much about parental involvement, or lack thereof, in the concept of self-esteem as a child in elementary school. What I learned the most from this discussion was the importance of being a good influence not only to your own children, but to others around you because you may never know what their own home life may be like. I felt this discussion led to great interaction with others in our class. I felt that many students came to the same learning conclusion of what an important role a teacher can play in a student's life. It represents my most significant learning because of the end result. This discussion helped me to reach out to my third grade teacher who made a huge impact during my elementary years in increasing my confidence.

**Joidee original post-** “The parenting style I received while in middle childhood made a huge impact on my self-esteem and interacts heavily with Erikson's fourth psychosocial crisis of industry versus inferiority. My Mother was very much the definition of "neglectful/uninvolved" parent during my middle childhood. My Father would fall under "permissive parenting". My mom suffered from untreated depression, and really had no idea what I would do after school, how I was doing in school, and the issues I dealt with on a daily basis. I was never taught how to handle school from my parents, or in social situations, I had to figure things out on my own. My dad struggled keeping a stable job and with little education, the jobs he did get paid minimum wage. With 6 children it was hard to provide the basic necessities, and we moved around often because of evictions.

I really struggled in early elementary school. Being new in school, and then having to switch schools after moving hindered how I viewed myself. I judged myself as not being as good or smart as the other students. My social comparison increased, and I became aware of what other classmates would wear to school, and noticed that my "hand me down" clothes were

lacking. I would get teased when I would wear the same outfits in the same week. I was extremely shy and had one friend who went to the same church and school I did. My parents were unable to afford after school activities which would have helped me develop realistic self-esteem.

However an experience that impacted my increase in self-esteem happened when I was in third grade. I had a very observant teacher. She noticed that I wasn't socializing with others very much, but she did notice that I loved to read and could memorize quickly. She decided that our class needed to perform a play in front of the school, and gave me the lead part. She knew from meeting my parents that she would take the role of explaining how to practice for my part at home. She encouraged and motivated me to "come out of my shell". (Even going above and beyond having me come over to her house to play with her children my age on numerous occasions. Today that may not go over as well as in the 80's, but she took on a "mothering" role as well as teacher.) I was able to memorize all of my lines quickly and she helped teach me how to present and act in front of a crowd. I went from feeling "inferior to industrious" through this experience. I was able to perform not only in front of my class, but in front of the whole school and families with confidence. My self-esteem rose knowing I could accomplish this when I was 8 years old.

Although my own mother had a parenting style that was not ideal, and my father's permissive parenting style that did not have that much of an impact while younger because he was rarely around, but did impact me during adolescence (another story that I won't get into), I am grateful that I had a teacher who understood that I needed help with my self-esteem and took action.”

### **Responses:**

**Kortni-** “Hearing stories like yours really puts in perspective the effect that parenting styles have on children and the way they view themselves. Thank you for sharing your experience. I have a friend whose parents are neglectful. My friend is a very smart person but didn't graduate high school for lack of applying himself. I know, if he wanted to, he could have gotten very good grades in school. He is just now, almost 4 years out of high school, beginning to have the desire to further his education and get a good job. What a difference it would have made for him if he had a teacher in elementary show him the potential he has and helped him believe in himself as in your experience.”

**Melody-** “My parents could never afford after school activities either, and yet they do provide a nice foundation of friendships and achievement so its a sad thing to not be able to either provide them or be a part of them. That is really nice that you had a teacher that was so in tune and took an action that helped you develop positively. The more experiences that I hear from classmates in the discussions, the more I realize the important role that teachers can play.”

**Joidee-** “Thank you Kortni and Melody~ It was interesting to go back and analyze and think more about my middle childhood. I wonder if my same situation were to happen today what effect a teacher can have with a student like myself. It's interesting to think where we would be

if we either didn't have the challenges in middle childhood, or had to go through more challenges than we did. I find it so neat to hear how our challenges have shaped our lives and others'. I enjoyed reading the section on "Resilience" and find that was very appropriate to how I handled the stresses of my early and middle childhood and adolescence."

**Melissa-** "Sounds like that teacher really helped shape you. I love to hear stories like that where a teacher goes above and beyond to help a student. Teachers are really second parents to their students. They spend more time with them than their parents do. And in some cases know their students better than that child's parent."

**Deana-** "Teachers are very much like second parents, during the week they see your kids about as much as you do, and see a side of them that you don't see. My daughter gets so close to her teachers that she always cries when the year is over. That is so great that your teacher was able to help you so much."

**Aristotle-** "Thanks for sharing your story. Six kids seems like an incredible feat, but I can see the downside of having that many children after reading your story. Obviously your teacher had a great impact on you and your life, it's amazing how small gestures can make such a difference for someone. More than we realize sometimes. It seems like they are more important when we reflect back on them too. I hope the experiences that you had have helped you with your self esteem even today."

**Trent-** "how amazing was your teacher! i wonder what your life would be like if it wasn't for your teacher? i am really sorry about your up bringing sounds like you made out ok. its amazing how big of a impact teacher can have on us and children during those crucial yrs of are childhood.its sad that are teacher dont get enough recognition and better pay. they really are the future of are children future!"

**Joidee-** "Yes, some teachers are definitely underpaid and many don't get the recognition needed. I remember my Senior Year of high school, I had a teacher that wanted us to write letters to at least 4 teachers we had during our school years that made an impact on us. I tried to look her up (this was the beginning of "Yahoo") with no success. Most kids in my graduating class had an easy time because they had never moved and most of their teachers were still at the local elementary and junior high schools. Since I had gone to over 9 schools in another state, it was a little harder for me to track any down. I think I ended up just writing thank you letters to high school teachers. My experience with her and some other teachers that had a great impact on me has helped me teach my boys how to give and show appropriate thanks and recognition to their school teachers."

**Alex-** "I'm sorry for your unfortunate situation, however, it's a blessing that you happened to have that teacher. I think it's incredible when you hear stories like this, and it really opens your eyes to what a great teacher is. Really touching story, thanks for sharing!"

**Joidee-** “She really was a great teacher. Interesting update~ I was able to "google" her name, and found her email address. I sent her a much overdue "thank you" email\*. Amazing. It will be interesting if it is the right email, and if I get a response!”

**Melissa-** “Joidee, how fun! I hope you get a response. I have many teachers I would love to contact :)”

**Jessica-** “Joidee, I appreciate such honesty in your post. It's awesome how wonderful of an influence you had.”

In interacting with other students from our class, it helped me to realize that I could still reach out to my former teacher and thank her for how much she did for me at such a critical age. I do not think there is anything better that can result from a class discussion than being able to connect what we are learning with those around us. I believe every class member learned and had growing experiences throughout all of the discussions. I loved all of the discussions, and being able to ponder on each phase of life and connecting experiences from them.

\*I am adding the email I sent to my teacher and the response I received from her.

Dear Margie~

I am about 23 years overdue, but I wanted to express how grateful I am to you for being such an amazing teacher. I am sure you don't remember me, but you were my 3rd grade teacher at xxxx Elementary School in xxxx (I think it was 1989-1990). My name is Joidee xxxx, my maiden name is xxxx. I was that really shy girl who you helped teach to have a passion for reading and even helped me get out of my "comfort zone" and gain confidence with a fun class play. When I look back at all of my many teachers throughout my school years, you are the one that stands out as making the most impact for me on what makes an incredible teacher. You were there when I needed guidance, direction, and a huge self-esteem boost. I don't know if you were aware of how much you did to help me at such a critical age, but it was exactly what I needed.

I hope life is going well for you. I hope your children are doing great as well. Thanks to "google" I have found your email address, and am excited to finally let you know how grateful I am to you.

Thank you so much!

My Teacher's Response:

Dear Joidee,

What a pleasure it was to receive such a delightful message. It was wonderful to hear from you. You made me smile and brought tears to my eyes with your kind and thoughtful words.

Of course I remember you. You were shy but so sweet- just the kind of student that is such a pleasure to teach. I believe you had light brown hair that was kind of straight, maybe a little curved at the bottom. I'm thinking you were Snow White but I couldn't say for sure now.

My years teaching were the most meaningful and memorable of my career. After I taught in xxxx for twelve years I worked as a principal in xxxx, xxxx, and xxxx. I enjoyed my job as a principal very much but my years as a teacher were the most rewarding as I was able to connect to so many wonderful students and watch them grow in many ways.

I was forced to retire suddenly two years ago to begin cancer treatment. While it seemed quite devastating at the time, everything has worked out for the best. I spent so many hours at school that I didn't always spend enough time with my family. The past two years I have had the opportunity to devote time to enjoy my children, and my three fabulous grandchildren. I am doing well and life is good.

Thank you so much for taking the time to find my email address, and composing a message that touched my heart. I'm so glad you have positive memories of our year together. You are an exceptional person to think of others in this way and I appreciate your kindness.

~Margie