

# Local author's new book tackles self-esteem issue

By Natasha Clark  
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How much does self-esteem play a part in who we are as individuals? Dr. Ingrid Schweiger said that the distinction between a person's character and our self-worth is undeniable. In her new book, "Self-Esteem for a Lifetime: Raising a Successful Child From the Inside Out" (AuthorHouse), Schweiger tackles the topics of empowering children, building up positive self-concepts and working to make sure influences that shape your child's self-esteem are the best they can be.

"Self-esteem influences the way a child achieves, socializes and loves. It influences all the decisions a child makes for his or her life," Schweiger said.

A psychotherapist with 30 years of experience, Schweiger has been recognized by the American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy for her family education programs used in communities throughout the world. With private practices in both East Longmeadow and New York City, Schweiger shuttles back and forth to work with individuals and couples, participate in seminars, workshops and speaking engagements. In between all of it, she still found time to churn out this book in hopes that it teaches others how to listen, respond effectively, resolve conflicts and help to manage anger and stress. She was inspired to take on the subject by her grandchildren. Schweiger said spending time with the little ones brought her attention back to that message that it is important for parents of children of all ages to pay attention to how they relate to their children.

"Parents are in a very powerful position to influence how a child feels about him or herself," Schweiger said. "In addition I think it's so important for parents to look at all of the important relationships in the life of the child."

Unlike many parenting books, Schweiger wants the reader to make a direct correlation between the material and their personal experiences. To do that, each chapter has an exercise for parents/guardians to fill out, a reflection portion, a journal and quick key reminders of each section.

The staple of the book is that high self-esteem is not something that your child is going to develop after a few pats on the back after a great football game, praise sang after a spectacular report card or a devoted following from their peers. Schweiger hammers home that it is an ongoing process.

"Self-esteem is a lens that you use. You look through this lens. It leads all of our choices in life. It answers the questions, 'who am I and what do I deserve?' I find that most people who come in to see me, very often, I need to help them build their self-esteem to help make better choices," Schweiger explained.

"Self-Esteem for a Lifetime" also presses the significant impact that all relationships have on a child's self-esteem. It encourages the reader to take a look at the family system, a term Schweiger uses to define the relationships that a family participates in extended relatives, school peers, work colleagues and those in the community.

In an excerpt from the book, Schweiger writes, "When examining the family system, watch for changes in any of the family members' behavior. The changes in one person's behavior 'ripple' throughout the system." Examples of things a child will react to are changes in caregivers, a new baby, more difficult academic work, marital stress and entering adolescence. Schweiger said listening is an important piece of the puzzle.

"Get out of the role of reactor and judge and be more available to hear and reflect on the feelings behind the words," Schweiger suggested.

She hopes the book will be an outlet for change for those who are seeking it.

"My goal is change," she added. "I'm providing food for thought. It gives you an opportunity to stop, think and reflect and answer the question, 'how does this apply to me? What can I use in my own life?' Call this a therapeutic experience."

Schweiger has served on the faculties of the University of Massachusetts in Amherst and the New School for Social Research in New York City. She co-authored "Teacher Stress and Burnout," published by the National Education Association and produced the award-winning documentary "Teen Suicide."

"Self-Esteem for a Lifetime: Raising a Successful Child From the Inside Out" is available at [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com), [www.bn.com](http://www.bn.com) and at Kiddy Winks, 801 Williams St. in Longmeadow. For more on Schweiger visit [www.self-esteemforalifetime.com](http://www.self-esteemforalifetime.com) or send an e-mail to [info@dringridschweiger.com](mailto:info@dringridschweiger.com).

