

Improving Young Carers Beliefs in their Own Abilities

Let young carers know that they are capable individuals. If a young carer believes that you believe in them they are more likely to have their own sense of self belief.

Try and avoid saying negative things like “you’re not that sporty are you?” Statements like this can have long lasting affect on the young carer’s ability to believe in themselves. It could affect their motivation to try other things.

What you say, whether positive or negative, can have a long lasting effect on the young carer you work with so be careful how you phrase things.

Set tasks that are challenging but pitched at their skills level. Help them find tasks that are just difficult enough to inspire and satisfy them but not so difficult that they become anxious.

Help make tasks more manageable, that way they can become achievable and less daunting. Give feedback on each step and praise them for their effort and persistence.

If the young carer requires help you should try and give it. Try not to provide the solution. Give the person support to find the solution themselves, this way you are helping to boost their confidence. You could point them in the direction of a web site that might help, or you could ask them a question which encourages them to look at situation in a different way. Some of the activities within Section 2 can be used to help young carers look at problem solving, and would be ideal to use in one to one time with them.

Encourage young carers not to compare themselves to others, set their own standards instead. You can help this by pointing out improvements an individual has made on previous work, e.g., it might be that the young carer takes the lead in an activity for the first time. Point out that you have noticed they put themselves forward for this, how confident they seemed to be, and well done for taking the lead and doing a fine job. Don’t point out how much better or worse their work is than someone else’s. All you do here is create tension in the group, affect someone else’s self belief and encourage the young carer you are praising to think that they always have to be better or try harder than others and that their effort wasn’t worth anything.

Praise a young carer for doing something well. Be honest with your praise. If they haven’t done well be honest about it, but be positive. Encourage them to look at what they can do different the next time. If you tell them they did something well when they didn’t they won’t believe you and could be confused by your dishonesty which can destroy the trust they have in you.



Be honest about failure too! Failure and making mistakes are normal, it is how we learn – they can be used to help us find other ways to achieve our goals. Show this by admitting your own errors in a positive way, e.g., “You are right, I should have checked the time for the cinema, I’ll do that the next time.”

Take time to show genuine interest in what the young carer is doing. Show that you are interested in their work, their caring role, their life. Ask them questions about what they are doing. By giving such attention, especially in one to one situations, you can greatly influence a young carer’s confidence.

Keep any criticism constructive. Describe the behaviour, not the person. Instead of telling a young person they are “disruptive in the group”, say that they’re not giving others a chance to join in and they need to be quiet and allow others to speak. Be specific about the changes you want them to make if they have made a mistake.

Be careful about using the words “always” and “never”, e.g., “You’re **always** running late” or “You **never** want to come out with us”. Ask yourself “are these statements really true?” If not, you are just encouraging pessimistic thinking.

Believe in the young carer’s potential and help them if they have doubt about their own abilities. Sometimes young carers get caught up in their caring role and can “forget” their successes in other areas. Remind them of these. If they have passed an exam at school (when that is something they thought they were unlikely to do) remind them of that success. It’s also important to remind them of the “success” they have as a young carer. Not only is it a difficult role they may be carrying out, but they are doing the best they can and still going to school, coming to group, seeing friends etc.