Vulnerable and robust, with positive self-worth.

Many adults worry as to how they can help children become more robust. Because life isn't always easy. Although we want only good things for our children, we have reason to believe that they will face adversity both now and later.

We might jump to the conclusion that making children robust is about "toughening them up". But being robust is not to be tough or unbreakable, and even the coolest kid in town can struggle with hidden pain. Being robust is essentially about self-worth. Knowing that you have value as a human being just the way you are. This means that I can be sensitive, noticing other people's glances and comments, feel vulnerable and weak when something hurts me - and yet be robust - because I have experienced that my way of being me is good enough. People love me anyway.

The terms self-confidence, self-image and self-esteem are often used interchangeably. Let's take a look at them:

- Self-confidence is confidence in what we can and cannot achieve, linked to specific skills, or looks. This one is straightforward and easy to understand.
- Self-esteem/ Self-image is the perception you have of yourself as a person in various roles. You may have a good self-image in some roles, and a not so good self-image in others.
- Self-worth is the experience or feeling you have of your worth, or value as a human being.

These terms do have some overlap, and they are all related to each other. None of them are static or constant, but rather constantly changing, and are affected by various things. Self-confidence and self-esteem are largely influenced by achievements, what we experience to master, and feedback from others. Our sense of self-worth is, in a way, the foundation. It is influenced by our own thoughts and our expectations of ourselves, assessments as to when we are "good enough", and most importantly by how we have been and are being met by those who are important to us.

Perhaps you have felt that you should be or behave in a certain way to be liked? That positive feedback has been mostly about your achievements? Perhaps you have felt rejected when showing other sides of you than people around you expected or desired? If so, it can feel unsafe to be yourself. Admitting mistakes and apologizing can become almost impossible, and not coping can feel catastrophic.

If, on the other hand, you have experienced that it is okay to make mistakes, that it's actually possible to learn something from them. That the process should be in focus - not necessarily the result. That it's okay to be different because it can add something valuable into the mix. That people in my life show that they appreciate being around me in everyday life. I am just as important as a person when I do badly as when I do well. I am important and valuable in our group because I am exactly who I am! – That is when we can be both vulnerable *and* robust - with positive self-worth.

We can say that how we speak to others can become their inner voice. That's why it's helpful to remind ourselves to say sentences like these every day:

- "It's always so nice to meet you."
- "Your smile makes me happy".
- "I notice that you are a good friend to those around you."
- "What an impressive effort!"
- "I appreciate you."
- "I'm so glad that I get to walk beside you right now."
- "You are an important part of our group".