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Building Self Esteem in Children

Preventing Eating Disorders in Kids by Teaching Them Positive Tools

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Full Mouse, Empty Mouse by Dina Zeckhausen; illustrations by Brian Boyd



Building self-esteem in children is a difficult task, when outside the home kids are subjected to the same advertisements and language that adults are. Teaching children tools to help them build stronger selves and positive tools to cope is key in preventing [eating disorders](#) at a young age.

Books like Dina Zeckhausen's **Full Mouse, Empty Mouse: A Tale of Food and Feelings**, illustrated by Brian Boyd, is one of those resources that make the job for parents a bit easier.

The narrative is targeted to kids ages 7-12 and weaves useful advice into the fun of a story about a mouse family, The Squeaks.

The Book

When The Squeaks are found to be living in The Grumbles' house, they must live in a constant state of caution to avoid the mousetraps, the cat and the dog. The two children mice, Billy Blue and Sally Rose, cope with the stress in their own ways.

Billy Blue eats to stuff down his fear, while Sally Rose stops eating altogether. Both children keep their emotions to themselves and try to deal in their own ways. It's not until Aunt Lou sits them down to share their feelings that they are able to abandon their behaviour.

When she taught them new tools to deal with their stress, the family began functioning by sharing their fears and getting through it together. They made up little songs to sing to help them remember to listen to their bodies to find the answers they need.

Tools for Parents to Teach

- Expressing feelings is a very simple and important key to preventing eating disorders. By sharing their emotions, children are less likely to use food, or lack of, as a way to express their anger, frustration, happiness, sadness, etc.
- Listening is the other end to the above tool, as keeping an open ear is essential for kids to open up
- The role of food should be as nourishment, not as a reward, punishment or comfort
- Encourage daughters and sons to form loving relationships with other adults and siblings with whom they can build trust. This will offer them an alternative place to go if there's something they need to talk about but don't want to say it to a parent
- Motivate children to try different ways of expressing themselves, whether it is writing poetry or letters, painting or building. [Creativity](#) is a great outlet for communicating non-verbally

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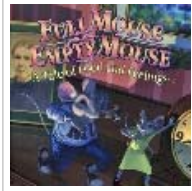
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- Be a role model by not [dieting](#), [restricting food](#), [overeating](#) or using food as a way to numb feelings. Kids follow their parent's lead, so behaviour is easily passed down to them whether it seems harmless or not
- Get moving! Encourage children to participate in team sports, playing at the playground, running around the yard or park, swimming at the local pool, or anything they enjoy that gets them moving their bodies

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The book [Full Mouse, Empty Mouse: A Tale of Food and Feelings](#) is highly recommended for parents with young children and teachers in a classroom setting.



[Full Mouse, Empty Mouse by Dina Zeckhausen](#)

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