

# **Its All About Self-Esteem**

Faiza Mir

I had once heard that confidence is given to us by others. We may climb the highest peaks, conquer forts or defeat the whole world, the person who teaches us to take pride in who we are is the teacher. This is the person who teaches us about self-esteem and shows us how to cope with rejection. That person, the teacher is never absent from our minds; the lessons that a teacher taught us always glimmer in the deep recesses of our hearts.

Being a good student I was cherished by my teachers. But I never thought that I would receive such love and attention from Ms. Riffat Sultana, the Head Mistress of our school, the Postal Colony Girls High School.

I was in class ninth then. There was to be a wedding in my family for which my family was going to leave town for tendays. I would also have had to take a few days off from school in order to go with them. When I presented my application to the class teacher she said, “Faiza, don’t go because this year you are going to get the Best Student Award.”

This was the first time that our school was going to have a prize distribution ceremony, and the first time that any student would get this award. On the one hand I was excited to know this but on the other hand I was also sad to know that I would not be able to stay back for the school function all alone, since all my family was going to be away. News of this issue reached the Head Mistress. I was called to the Head Mistress’s office. The class teacher was also with me. Ms. Riffat heard me out. There was only a clash of two days. Had I gone two days later, I would be able to attend the school function.

My surprise knew no bounds when Ms. Riffat very matter-of-factly picked up the phone and called up the Inspector of Schools Ms. Zakia Durrani. “One of our most brilliant students will not be able to attend this function. If it is not inconvenient for you, can we have this function two days earlier so that Faiza may attend? She is getting the Best Student Award and a few other awards too.” When Ms Zakia agreed to the change in schedule, I thanked Ms. Riffat with mixed emotions of surprise and joy. Before I left the office, she said, “For me, each one of my teachers is important. For me each one of my *future* teachers is important.”

Her prediction proved true. Today I am a teacher, with the confidence that she gave me. The feeling of being important that Ms Riffat Sultana gave to a ninth grader many years ago, is still with me. Today I am the torch-bearer for transferring this same love and sense of importance to each one of my students.

An Iranian saying puts it very aptly:

*If you are you, then I am you too*  
*If you are the respected you, I am the respected you too*

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