

THE Newsette

THING TO DO TODAY

YOU ASKED, WE ANSWERED



What's wrong with being confident? Absolutely nothing, and [Illana Raia](#) (she/her), founder + CEO of [Être](#), wants girls everywhere to know that. The platform she created is essentially a mentorship ecosystem that brings young ladies and extraordinary leaders together for face-to-face connections. “We go directly into companies, bring experts into school clubs, give girls a TED-Ed stage to raise their voices, and help them get their questions answered by women dominating in their industries,” says Illana.

Here, we chatted about how Illana’s daughter was the inspiration for it all, the latest findings about the confidence gap, and what they’re doing to close it. (And maybe you’ll even learn a thing or two to share with your little sister, younger cousin, niece, or daughter.)

How exactly did Être come to be?

Être started when I realized that my daughter, then in middle school, had no idea of my day-to-day responsibilities as a corporate lawyer. My initial reaction was, “Okay, this is bad... but easy to fix.” I started introducing her to my amazing friends in leadership positions and encouraged her to ask questions about their careers. From the moment my daughter asked her first question, I thought, “What if I could connect other girls with the same mentorship and networking opportunities?” Thus began Être—which in French means “To Be.” I wanted to help girls figure out who they wanted to be.

Your most [recent research](#) found that girls’ confidence has increased since 2022, yet there’s been a decline in self-image and mental wellbeing. Why do you think this is?

First, I want to address that an increase in confidence from 2022 shows real progress. But what our new research uncovered was that between ages 13 to 18, girls’ confidence drops by 20%. That's why we can't get comfortable. There’s still so much work to be done to close this confidence gap and help them feel empowered. Our goal is to have girls’ confidence increase as they get older.

There are so many factors coming into play in terms of girls' self-image and mental wellbeing. From social media expectations to the mounting pressures they feel from school and sports, it can all add up to feel overwhelming. What we do know is that more girls who have a mentor say they feel happy (51% vs. 40% without a mentor) and optimistic (30% vs. 17% without a mentor). On the flip side, fewer girls who have a mentor say they feel stressed (24% vs. 41%) or anxious (18% vs. 36%). We might not be able to shield girls from everything impacting their self-image in these years, but it's becoming clear that early mentorship can empower confidence in ways that really bolster their wellbeing.

The report also says that girls believe they would benefit from having a mentor in various areas of their life. Why is this kind of support not only important, but needed?

While we often think of mentorship as something needed in terms of careers, early mentorship benefits girls in uniquely powerful ways. Nearly 70% of girls say they would be less likely to quit their sport if they had a mentor. That's important when the Women's Sport Foundation [says that](#) by age 14, girls are quitting their sport at 2X the rate of boys! Whether it's getting confident enough to raise your hand in class or being brave enough to raise your voice about something worrying you, having a mentor gives girls an extra resource to turn to—exactly when they need it most.

What's your advice for those who are struggling with their own confidence right now, whether it be with self-image, mental wellbeing, or work?

Reach out directly to a mentor. More than half (65%) of the young girls we recently surveyed said they're interested in reaching out to mentors but don't know where to start. One of the biggest advantages of social media platforms like LinkedIn or Instagram, and resources such as Être, is that you can find people who have the experience or insights that you're interested in learning more about. Don't be afraid to send that direct message or email—in a safe and intentional way—asking for a few mentorship moments, because the majority of girls who have a mentor feel happier, smarter, more confident, and optimistic.

And finally, what are some ways we can boost our own confidence?

I often tell girls to “Raise their hands instead of lowering their standards,” and I mean that in a myriad of ways. Raise your hand to ask a question—getting answers when you're curious leads to confidence. Raise your hand to help the next girl, as empowering others can make us feel more confident. And raise your hand to seek out a mentor. Whether it's a teacher, a coach, a community leader or an expert in your favorite activity, nine in 10 girls directly attribute higher confidence to mentorship. So, if you are feeling burdened, text your mentor! Writer's block? Hop on a call and talk it out. Just general thoughts about your day that need to be expressed. You know what I'm going to say... Raise your hand and reach out.