



How to Boost Your Teen's Self-Esteem

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Teens are stuck in an *in-between* world. They're neither children nor adults. They're adjusting to both physical and mental changes, including emotional extremes caused by additional activity in the part of the brain that regulates emotions.

Needless to say, for many teens, this is a confusing time!

Along with the normal confusion, teens often suffer from low self-esteem and peer pressure. Females are more prone to self-esteem issues and often get more attention for the problem, but males are just as susceptible. In fact, ***any teen is vulnerable to self-esteem challenges.***

As parents and involved adults, it's our responsibility to help teens foster a healthy self-esteem. It's an ongoing process and there are no shortcuts. ***Teens need to be constantly reminded that they're great kids and we're proud of them.***

Follow these strategies every day to boost your teen's self-esteem:

- 1. Take the time to talk with your teen.** While your teen may not want to talk to you, make sure they know you're available if they change their mind. Sometimes just knowing you're there for them makes a difference.
- 2. Part of talking with a teen is *actively listening*.** Teens with self-esteem issues often feel that no one listens to them or cares about what they have to say. Show them you're listening by letting them finish and then asking questions about what they said.

3. Encourage your teen to live a healthy lifestyle. Many times problems can manifest when teens are couch potatoes or have unhealthy eating habits. When a teen eats a well balanced diet and gets a regular amount of exercise, it's easier for them to feel better about themselves.

- Schedule your teen for a full check-up with your doctor. Your primary health care provider can rule out any physical causes for your teen's low self-esteem. They may also recommend additional steps or counseling that can help.

4. Encourage your teen to get involved in an activity they enjoy. It could be any activity, club, or organization. Getting them involved in something will help them realize they're more normal than they think!

- Encourage their individuality and interests by letting them pick the activity. ***Give them the freedom to express themselves*** by getting involved in their own interests and passions.

5. Set a positive example for your teen. No matter how distant your teen may seem, they still model your behaviors closely. ***If they see you have a self-esteem issue, they may mimic that.*** Set an example with a positive attitude towards yourself and others.

6. Help your teen set goals and celebrate when they reach them. Start with small goals that they can achieve in a short period of time. When they reach the goal, celebrate with them. If it takes longer to reach their goal, keep encouraging them.

- ***Show them that taking definitive action to achieve their goal is just as important as reaching the goal.***

- Let your teen know that it's okay to change their goal along the way. This is the way of life and an important skill teens need to learn. When circumstances change, we may need to re-adjust our plans. If your teen understands this, it will help build their confidence.

7. Let your teen know you're proud of them. When they score an A, tell them how great they did. If they got a C, it's just as important that your teen knows you're proud of that grade as well. ***Encourage them to do their best and be proud of them when they do.***

A teen's self-esteem can be fragile. All the time you spend building your teen's self-esteem can be torn down in one afternoon.

Teach your teen that learning to deal with disappointment, criticism, and challenges is an important life skill. Talk to your teen about how important it is to know they're still a great person worthy of love and affection, no matter what life may throw their way.

As with anyone, teens will have good and bad days. ***Never be discouraged or give up on them.*** Follow these strategies and soon enough, you'll know that you're on the right path. Your teen will go through mood swings, but with time and love, they'll emerge as a strong and confident adult.