

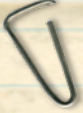
12 WAYS TO INSTILL SELF-WORTH IN YOUR TEEN

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Whether we realize it or not, we have a huge impact on our teen's sense of self-worth. In fact, parents with poor self-esteem usually translate their insecurities to their children, while parents with strong self-esteem usually raise children who view themselves positively. That means you need to be your teen's greatest champion. Here are 12 ways to cheer him on.

- 1. Encourage proper identity.** Teens experience pressure to succeed at an early age. As a result, they can grow discouraged or feel like they can't measure up to our hopes or their own goals. Encourage your teen to base her self-worth on who she is in Christ, not what she does. Let her relationship with Christ be her chief identifier.
- 2. Listen.** As parents, we often talk "at" our teens rather than taking the time to listen to them. Cultivate the art of listening. Avoid formulating a mental comeback while your teen is speaking, but really listen to discern fears and emotions behind his words. Let your teen know you are available any time she wants to talk.
- 3. Validate feelings and opinions.** It's really hard to live in a house where opinions aren't valued and where you're not allowed to express emotion. Consider having family forums – times of discussion that involve all family members. Let each family member have a voice.
- 4. Console and comfort.** Your teen may be having some emotional battles at school or in relationships. Each teen faces these challenges differently. Remember that what seems insignificant to you could be a crisis to her.
- 5. Notice strengths and downplay weaknesses.** It's easy to view life critically, constantly pointing out the negatives and rarely recognizing the good. Not only does this undermine self-worth, but it also models a critical spirit they are likely to adopt as adults. Instead, compliment the things he is going right.
- 6. Bless with touch.** As children grow, we tend to stop touching them. This creates distance, and they wonder if they still matter. Just because your teen is older doesn't mean she no longer needs your touch.
- 7. Pray aloud.** Nothing makes a teen feel more special than hearing his parents pray for him. Avoid using prayers to address problems in a round-about way. Let your prayers be affirming and filled with blessings and gratitude for your teen.



8. Discover spiritual gifts. Helping your teen discover her spiritual gifts is a great way to boost her self-esteem. Your church may even provide an assessment of spiritual strengths.

9. Cultivate a sense of heritage. Feeling a connection to “roots” (both genetically and spiritually) helps teens develop a sense of identity and enhances self-worth. Share strengths, weaknesses, and spiritual stories from your family in an effort to teach and train your teen.

10. Provide decision-making opportunities. Teens learn by making decisions and experiencing consequences. Providing your teen with decision-making opportunities sends the message that you trust him. After all, it’s better to let him test his decision-making skills at home than later at college.

11. Don’t harp on body image. The world sends the message that unless you are one of the “beautiful people” you are no one. Help your teen build a sense of self-worth from something other than what her body looks like. Model healthy eating and exercise habits, but resist the urge to criticize your own body or your teen’s.

12. Say “I love you” often and mean it. Let every greeting and every parting include an “I love you,” even when you are angry with your teen. Regardless of the circumstances, these teens are a precious heritage and a gift from God.

Try Some of These Words of Affirmation with Your Teen

- “I appreciate you because...”
- “I was pleased to see you...”
- “I want to thank you for...”
- “You blessed me when...”
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Your verbal praise will raise your teen’s sense of self-worth.