

If your teen has ever said...

- “No one understands me”
- “I’m ugly”
- “No one gets me”
- “I feel everyone judges me”
- “I’m not good enough”

## **SUPPORT YOUR TEEN IN LEARNING HOW TO BUILD SELF-ESTEEM**

Below are five ways you can help your teen build self-esteem. Improving self-esteem, personal value, and self-worth provide your teen with the foundation to a “happy life”.

- Self-Care
- Improving Self-Esteem
- Building Healthy Relationships
- Being “Genuine” versus trying to “fit in”
- Lifestyle choices

Who doesn’t want a happy life...

As a professional counselor, I love working with teens and building “real” connections that provide skill building. The very skills that allow people to overcome emotional challenges like peer pressure, anxiety, or sadness.

## **A GUIDE TO HELPING YOUR TEEN OWN THEIR WORTH IN RELATIONSHIPS**

Healthy relationships start with preserving self-respect in our own relationships and with oneself. Often, the challenge for teens can be external. These are people, that we hope to build relationships with can disappoint us.

Teens should understand that they must focus on their self-respect to establish healthy relationships. This can be done by focusing on questions like “Is this relationship fair to me?” or “am I compromising my self-worth in this relationship?”

I like to think that we all have some sort of “spider sense”; yes, the same spider sense that Spiderman has. Our “spider sense” acts like an alarm reacting feelings of discomfort.

Teens often face situations that trigger the spider sense due to the social complexities that follow them. For example, if you are asked to meet up with some friend’s afterschool, you do not need to feel “forced” to engage in the activity or “feel the need to apologize” if you are unable to go. Instead, it’s simply okay to say no. To say that you cannot go because you are wanting to take time to yourself. Maybe for homework or self-care.

When I work with teens in counseling sessions, one of the core areas of focus is building value. I work with teens to learn their value and understand how that impacts relationships. Without it, relationships can become problematic often leading teens to feeling “pressured”, “bullied”, or “discomfort”. As a teen, or parent to a teen, try to focus on what your values are and how they line up with relationship building. For instance, you could focus on “how you want to be treated in a relationship” or “deal breakers in relationships”.

Building worth in relationships demands honesty. What this means is that at times transparency and truth must be part of the relationship. For example, if you feel mistreated in the relationship, discuss this with your friend versus allowing time to past. Be real. Be your genuine self without worry that it’ll end the relationship.

Relationships will have their ups and downs. They will be tricky and at times push you to test boundaries. Often the hurt in relationships takes place when we feel lonely or are desperately fishing for a friend. Remember, focus on your values, truth and self-respect all as core parts of building worth in your relationship.

Lastly, as a fun activity go back to the discussion above regarding value. Consider values as a “bill of rights for relationships”. Create your own bill of rights by writing down a list of your expectations in relationships.

[LINK TO PRINTABLE BILL OF RIGHTS](#)

## **Allow your teen to grow!**

As a teen counselor, I work with teens who struggle with depression, anxiety and self-esteem. Often teens struggle with the idea of “fitting in” or seeking validation from the wrong places.

Imagine having a cup that has tiny holes at the bottom. Each time the cup is filled with water, it never seems to remain full. Teens often struggle with the idea that external validation like “fitting in” or “perfect grades” will make them feel “good inside”. Yet, what happens is that the initial positive feelings pour out of the cup.

The validation or praise received, never seems like enough.

## **How to help your teen improve self-esteem?**

- Awareness is the key to recognition, without it we can truly become “stuck” in a negative cycle of thoughts and behaviors. Teens can improve their self-esteem by learning the impact of hurtful self-directed statements like “I’m a failure” or “I just can’t do it”. Help your teen by “showing” them when they engage in a destructive behavior versus “judging” the action.
- Mindfulness plays a vital role in helping teens understand how and when judgment is taking place. A fun activity to do with your teen is the “coin jar”. Your teen is to place a coin into the jar each time he or she recognizes judgment taking place. This activity supports in “recognizing” when judgment takes place and “promoting” a healthy shift in awareness and compassion.
- One of my favorite activities to do with teens is creating clarity. Teens often make statements based on judgment versus compassion. This activity helps teens learn how to shift hurtful judgmental statements to supportive compassionate statements. For instance, “the music you listen to sucks!” versus a healthier alternative “we have different interest in music”.
- The last strategy to help your teen improve self-esteem is focused on practice, encouragement, and support. Practice each strategy learned with your teen as often as needed. Encourage your teen to shift their view point to one filled with love, kindness and compassion. Lastly, support your teen along their journey. It’ll be worth it!

## **Self-Care MUST be a part of your life!**

Life is going to have ups and downs. To remain balance, we must set aside time each day to take care of ourselves. Educating teens on self-care can help them remain centered throughout life and the many difficult moments that lie ahead.

Parents can model self-care habits and behaviors for their teen as a “show and tell” way. Below is a list of self-care therapy strategies that may work for you:

### **Self-Care Skills**

- **Do something different that you normally do not do.** Pulling your mind away from the normal routine can be extremely therapeutic to the body and mind. Examples include: walking around the mall, cleaning the windows at home or rearranging the bedroom.
- **Lending a helpful hand to others can help you feel positive and centered.** Examples include: writing a thank you note to a friend, making coffee for the family or cleaning up after dinner when it’s not your turn.
- **Practicing the art of daydreaming can allow you to get lost in your thoughts.** Examples include: thinking about your favorite vacation, imaging yourself flying or counting the number of blue cars that pass by as you sit in the back seat.
- **Counting your blessings provides a feeling of gratitude.** Examples include: comparing your struggles or situation to those less fortunate.

### **Utilization of the 5 senses allows self-care to take place.**

Allowing yourself to explore sensations can create a feeling of change that for some is therapeutic. Examples include for each sense include:

- **Vision.** Practice watching the clouds and guessing the shape.
- **Hearing.** Listen to loud music or find a quiet spot deep in the woods.
- **Smell.** Place your favorite candles near the bath tub. Take a bath and enjoy the scent.
- **Taste.** Eat a sour food. Sit back and feel the sensations triggered by your taste buds.
- **Touch.** Slowly pass your hand through tall grass.

## Self-Care NOW

Self-Care can help you feel empowered and willing to take on challenging situations. Below is a list of self-care strategies that do not have to wait until tomorrow:

- **Vacation.** Create a day-cation by spending the day at the pool or walking your favorite trail.
- **Create a today-list.** Write down everything you want to do today and check off each task as you complete it.
- **Meditation.** Follow along to a YouTube meditation class.
- **Imagination.** Create your own space of serenity by imaging yourself at peace. For me, it's imaging myself at the beach with my toes in the sand!
- **Identity.** Look at yourself in the mirror. Find the strength! Find the compassion! Find the love!

A life with self-care in it is far better than one without. Modeling self-care enables you to have peace and balance on a regular basis. Teens tend to face adversity and struggle in a manner that requires self-care.

## **Keep it REAL**

At one point in life, maybe now or years back, you experienced the ever-challenging struggle of “fitting in”. Teens often believe that they “must” or “have to” fit in to be “liked” by others. As unrealistic as this is, the reality is that it’s happening. Teens are struggling to learn how to be genuine versus fitting in.

As a professional counselor that truly loves working with teens, the topic of “fitting in” is often one discussed.

## **How to help your teen be Genuine versus trying to “fit in”**

- **Genuine + You = Honesty**  
Teens often have trouble with the social pressures of fitting in due to factors like feeling misunderstood, insecure over rejection, or afraid to allow their identity to shine. Through the practice of encouragement, teens can feel empowered to let their true personality shine!
- **Leading by example** allows teens to witness firsthand that they too can share their true personality versus hiding behind a mask. Show your teen direct examples of how you are genuine and honest about who you are.
- **Encourage your teen to talk about what’s important to them** and use their personal interest as channels to connect with others that share similar interest.
- **Provide your teen with positive reinforcement** by encouraging healthy changes.
- **Encourage your teen to engage in one activity per week** that builds self-confidence and self-esteem.

## **Remove the MASK**

It’ll be downright impossible to truly build a healthy connection if you are wearing a mask! Help your teen learn that connections are built through genuine sincere practice versus “faking”. This is often a sensitive and vulnerable practice as teens may feel insecure in who they are. Encourage your teen to explore “feeling vulnerable”. It’s okay!

A great place to start is through conversation. Sit with your teen and listen to him/her engage in “real” “honest” conversation. Listen and accept without trying to change who they are.

### **It’s SCARY!**

Removing the mask may be a scary and uncomfortable act. Yet, accept that it’s supposed to be scary and uncomfortable. Educate your teen to understand that the mask was an unhealthy protective mask.

A mask hiding their beauty!

### **A road to acceptance**

Encouraging your teen to create healthy relationships with people that “like” them for them allows acceptance to take place. Healthy relationship is “real” “genuine” relationships. These relationships aid teens in removing their mask and accepting their inner self versus “fitting in”.

A great place to start is at home. Your home can be the perfect place for reinforcing positive behaviors, encouraging healthy relationships, and building confidence.

**Take care and talk soon,**



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