



Teen Confidence

Teenager often experience a “crisis in confidence” when something in their world ignites. This can be as simple as trying a new activity or as complicated as navigating social relationships. And while feelings may be involved, confidence is not about emotions; rather, it is about ability and being good at something. Unfortunately when anyone lacks confidence, it can lead to negative feelings, situational depression, and undue anxiety.

Further complicating this complex crisis is that it can be difficult to recognize a teen who lacks confidence. If your angst ridden adolescent is constantly seeking approval, has few opinions of his own, and/or is always following and never leading, he may be struggling with feelings of low self worth. Redirecting these negative energies toward a more positive outlook, however, can be easily accomplished.

Highlighting your son’s strengths will promote positive posturing. Take a look at your teen’s inner world to determine where he excels. Engage in conversation about how success in one area can translate to a “nervous area”. A student that is good at video games, for example, is persistent, and this attribute can be applied to many other life activities including school work, extra-curriculars, or a job search.

Next, talk with your son about looking confident. Self-assured people smile which also creates internalized relaxed feelings. Strong people make eye contact and appear in control of situation. Poised people speak with a positive tone and exude strength. If one acts confident, then they will be confident.

Forming positive relationships will also build self-esteem. Joining appropriate peer activities will allow your son to meet like minded teens and feel good about his personal pursuits. Developing relationships with adult mentors such as teachers and coaches will provide strong role models who support your parental concerns. And, of course, spending time with mom and dad is also important. Celebrate success but also talk about failure by focusing on the positive and future improvement.

Children are not born lacking self-esteem or with excessive confidence, rather these emotions are created. Feelings of poor self-esteem stem from negative attention and unconstructive criticism. Confidence, on the other hand, is built through appropriate praise and growth promoting activities. Be available for your teen and encourage him to try new things.