



## Principally Speaking

Special Thoughts on Raising Kids

### IT'S OKAY TO CATCH YOUR TEEN DOING SOMETHING RIGHT

It may come as a surprise for some parents to learn that most teens are suffering from a strong case of self-doubt. In fact, a person's self-concept is usually lower during the teen years than at any other time in life. Self-doubt in teens is normal. It usually stems from the enormous social, emotional, physical and hormonal upheaval they are experiencing.

Over a period of time, parents can help turn these feelings of self-doubt into healthy feelings of self-worth.

#### **We Should Not Only See Our Teens, But Hear Them.**

Telling teens they are good won't help them build self-confidence. They will *always* discount what we say.

It's better to find your teen doing something right. Then say, "*I noticed how good you're getting with the computer,*" or "*I've noticed you've really improved at softball.*"

Then, listen to your teen. Ask why he or she thinks things are turning out so well. When teens actually say what they did to achieve success, it helps them build a stronger self-image.

Whenever possible, look at your teen's school chores and other activities. Say, "*You're getting good at these! I bet that feels good.*" The self-concept problem will go away—eventually.

#### **Focus On What's Right, Not What's Wrong:**

Many of us are programmed to react instead of to think; thus we end up being overly critical with our teens. This contributes to their self-doubt by focusing on the negative. Ask

yourself, "*How can I come across in a more positive way?*"

One way is to ask questions in place of giving orders. But that doesn't mean interrogation. Ask a question and then say, "*Is this what you mean?*" or "*Thanks for sharing that*" Long periods of silence between questions and asking incomplete questions that give your teen the chance to fill in the blanks can also be helpful.

#### **Never Take Away What a Teen Can Do Well:**

Maybe your teen is not a great student but is talented in sports. Wise parents encourage their teens to go after what they're best at with all they've got. This recharges their batteries and gives them strength to try things they're not as good at.

#### **Treat Your Teen Like a Good Friend:**

It's amazing how we treat our family and loved ones sometimes. We often show our friends much more consideration and respect! When in doubt about how you're responding to your teen, ask, "*How would I treat a good friend in this same situation?*"

#### **Adopt an Open Mindset:**

If we develop the mindset that teens are tough to work with, we'll probably miss all the joys they offer—their creativity, sense of humor, and the fact that everyday is just a little bit different!

Raise the Odds in Favor of a  
Better Relationship  
With Your Teen.