



High School Underachievement

Most parents want their teens to make it to the head of the class. Unfortunately, some teens lack the motivation to achieve good grades or even stay in school.

The reasons for underachievement can include low self-esteem, boredom, family issues, rebellion and drug abuse. And, it is a rare teen who does not tire of the intense competition of high school at some point before graduation.

Self-Image--The Best Guarantee

A healthy self-image is by far the best guarantee for graduation. Our goal should be to help our children feel good about themselves, not force them to complete high school. Trying to motivate an underachieving teen through pressure doesn't work. Even if we were successful in keeping our teens in school, many would most likely fail their first semester of college or at their job.

We can help build self-esteem by keeping communication open, showing concern in place of anger and being available without rescuing.

Place Responsibility With Your Teen

When you try to force your teen to stay in school, the result is like forcing a child to eat chocolate-- the child rebels in spite of himself!

It is essential that teens view their success or failure in school as their own responsibility. The parent in the following discussion sends this message:

Dad: *"Larry, there are two ways we live our lives. One is preparing for life and the other is being in life. As long as you are preparing for life, I'm happy to pay room and board and tuition."*

Larry: *"So?"*

Dad: *"So, your grades seem to indicate that you've quit preparing for life. Maybe it's time for you to pay your own way."*

Larry: *"No, way? I'm going to graduate."*

Dad: *"If your grades are at least average next grading period I'll know you are still preparing. If not, I'll know that you're in life and ready to pay your own way. I'll be*



PARENT TRUST
FOR WASHINGTON CHILDREN

interested to see what happens."

The responsibility for academic performance is now where it belongs--with Larry.

The Wrong Crowd

When teens run with a crowd that doesn't care about school, their grades often suffer. But forbidding teens from seeing their friends rarely works! It's better to maintain a good relationship with your teen, show concern without anger and *allow consequences to fall naturally.*

What's Wrong With Being Average

Some parents are concerned when their teens bring home C's. No one likes to admit their children are average! But, in reality, many of us get C's in some areas of our lives. A little understanding goes a long way toward building self-esteem - the real issue behind underachievement.

Tip of the day

Low Self-Esteem and Low Self-Achievement Go Hand in Hand

Reproduced with permission from:

©1990 Cline Fay Institute, Inc.

For more information, contact the Family Help Line: 1-800-932-HOPE (in Washington State)

Parent Trust for Washington Children

1601 2nd Avenue, Suite 410, Seattle, WA 98101

(206) 233-0156