

Chapter

3



“You are who you surround yourself with”...in so many ways this is true. Be sure the company you are in represents the person you want to be.

Family and friends have a huge influence on the way teens view themselves. Your influence began when your teen was very young and as she grows it continues along with the influence of other family members, friends, peers and even co-workers. This doesn't mean it is too late to begin anew. Your teen will love to hear about her childhood and how you may have messed up. Go ahead and tell her how you wish you would have done some things differently and why. It will open up new doors and show your teen how humble you are and that you really do care about her well-being. Showing her how you are not perfect can be freeing to her.

As a small child, before you realize what you are hearing, your mother's view of herself effects how you view yourself today. If your mother was critical of herself, talked (and/or still talks) about being fat or ugly or any other negative thought, you will have the tendency to emulate those judgments when looking at yourself and others. As a parent (especially mothers) you have been shaping your teens body image and self-esteem by your own opinion of yourself. Even if you always told your teen that she was beautiful and perfect, you may have showed her something different by being self-critical. You are teaching your daughter by example, showing her the real way to look at yourself. If you look in the mirror every day and talk about the things you are unhappy about on yourself, your teen will learn to do the same things. It is important for you to tell her positive things about herself, but if that is accompanied by your own self-criticism, she will start doing the same thing to herself. Your compliments could become something to your teen that you say or believe because you are her parent, but the way you view yourself becomes the eyes she will expect the rest of the world is judging her by.

Realize that most mothers don't intentionally bring their daughters down or want to teach them to have low self-esteem or a poor body image. Mothers are women that have gotten

Advice for Teens from the Pro:

How do I go about bringing up the subject of self-esteem and body image with my mom if she is reluctant to talk?

As a way to bring it up, you might try showing your mom a fashion magazine photo (or pointing out someone on TV) of what some people think of as an "ideal" body or look. Tell her that you sometimes feel down because you think you can't measure up to that standard. Hopefully your mom (or dad!) will reassure you that you are beautiful the way you are and that those images aren't "real" people.

According to buzzle.com...

Teens of impressionable age often fail to realize that they are getting into several habits and making several choices as a result of peer pressure alone.

Peer pressure is not always negative. There are negative and positive effects of peer pressure. Peer pressure can be positive if the peers help in changing the person for better.

According to buzzle.com...

Peer pressure can tend to have a diminutive effect on the individuality of adolescents by influencing their choices in terms of movies, music, fashion and their way of life in general!

Peer pressure is a serious issue, which can hamper the normal development and growth of a child and hence is not something, which can be dismissed as a temporary phase in high school, college or even later in life!

Peer pressure is sometimes cited as one of the main reasons which leads to unhealthy habits as well as deadly addictions like smoking, drinking as well as drug abuse.

stuck in the trap, like many others. It is possible that no one took the time to show you or talk with you about these things. If you realize that your mother may have had a negative effect on your self-esteem, don't be angry with her; Just understand the impact and make the decision now to not have the same negative effect on your children. Perhaps you could even bring this subject up with your teen and explain to her the kind of influence you had growing up. Teens want to know where you are coming from. This kind of soul sharing brings you closer and you can open up and help your teen discover some amazing things about you. It will help them to realize that you do understand what it feels like and you can relate to the struggles they are going through. It is even possible that your teen can help you feel better about yourself! Another shopping trip idea: Let your teen help you pick out some clothes for you. She will have fun helping you look hip and good. You will most certainly enjoy it also. Then you can talk about your and her good features and be proud

According to dosomething.org...

A study found that 53% of 13 year-old American girls are unhappy with their bodies. This number grows to 78% by the time girls reach seventeen.

of them. You don't have to be perfect and your teen doesn't expect you to. She just wants to know that you care about her and that you can understand what she is going through. Commit today to always talk about being beautiful and happy with yourself, especially around your children.

Fathers have an even stronger impact on a woman's self-esteem. A girl looks to her father to answer the main questions of "Am I lovely?" and "Am I worth pursuing?" The way a father answers these questions will shape a girl for a lifetime. Girls don't necessarily come right out and ask these specific questions of

their fathers, but as she is growing up these are the types of messages she needs to hear from him. They hit at the core of the Proverbs 31 woman she was created to be. Whether you realize it or not, your teen is asking these questions about herself. Is her father answering them for her? And, is he answering them with a resounding “yes” through his loving words and actions? Or is he answering them with a crushing “no” through his absence, criticisms or even emotional or physical abuse? The answer your teen is given will drastically effect how she views herself. Many women that grew up without a father or with a distant father, will have these questions left unanswered, making them unsure of their worth and beauty. If you believe there is a problem in this area talk to your teen about it and find her a counselor to help her through this. Do not ignore her words or deny that anything isn’t real. It is extremely damaging for a person to be abused or neglected by a parent and have the other parent be in denial over it. Talk to a therapist to get help on how to deal with this yourself. And remember, it is never to late to tell your daughter she is lovely and she can never hear it too much.

The good news is, that regardless of the presence and message from her father, your teen can get these answers from her ultimate Father, God. He addresses these questions throughout the Bible and is the real source of her identity. We all have the perfect father in God to correctly answer the questions that shape us. Just ask Him and teach your daughter to do the same. Even those with great fathers should reach out to God as no parent is perfect. He will fill in the gaps if you are willing to let Him. He is waiting to heal us. All we need to do is invite Him to show us our emotional wounds and allow Him to guide us through the healing process, painful as it may be.

Exercise for your teen: What messages did you hear from your parents growing up, either about yourself or about themselves? Were they positive or negative?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____