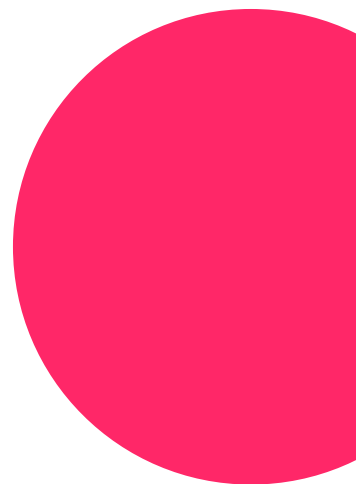


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Five Ideas for Raising Teen Self-Esteem

Simple, actionable ideas for parents, carers
and other supporting adults



Before we start, it's worth reflecting on what you're role modelling

Introduction

I'm often asked how we can address the fact that so many teenagers seem to really struggle with their self-esteem.

There's no magic answer but if you're a parent, carer, teacher or otherwise care about a teenager whose self-esteem could do with a boost, in this guide there are a few simple ideas to try.

It's worth reflecting on your own self-esteem and what you might be role modelling. It's hard to build strong, confident teens if we struggle to appreciate our own self-worth.

Pooky x

Tell them and show them that you care

When we care about people, we often make the mistake of assuming that they know that. Parents especially feel that love so keenly that they often just assume that their kids know they are loved inside and out unconditionally. But the teenager with low self-esteem does not know they're cared for. They often can't think of a single good thing to say about themselves and can't think why anyone else would be able to either.

Telling teenagers you care about them, or showing them in your actions, which might be as simple as just slowing down and being there to listen, can have a huge impact on their self-esteem. If you're authentic and consistent, after a while they'll begin to subconsciously question their assumptions that they're unlovable and not worth bothering with.

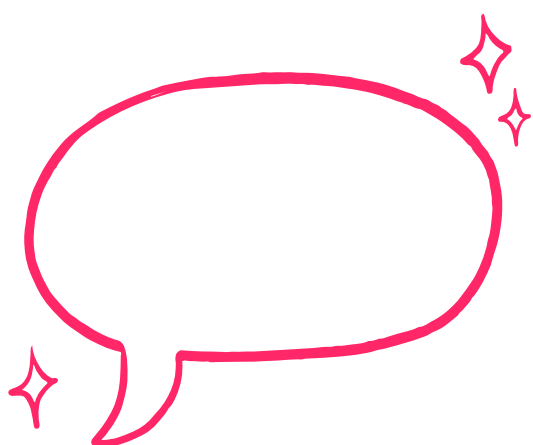


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Invite them to talk about their passions

Many people have a pet topic that they know more about than many other people. It might be a hobby, a favourite film or a book they've read. Whatever it is, indulge them and listen.

Let them tell you and teach you for a little while. Talking about things that interest us and that we're knowledgeable about makes us feel good, especially when the person listening to us is someone who we really care about and whose opinion we value.



Help them to see social media in context

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Sometimes teenagers' self-esteem takes a hit because they're surrounded by other people's seemingly perfect lives. It used to just be airbrushed pictures of models we had to contend with, but these days everyone is airbrushing not just their pictures but their entire life stories before they share them on platforms like Instagram, TikTok and Facebook.

Take time to help teenagers understand that we should view much of what we see cynically – when it comes to our own life we are living the warts and all version, but our friends and wider network are choosing to share only the abridged highlights.

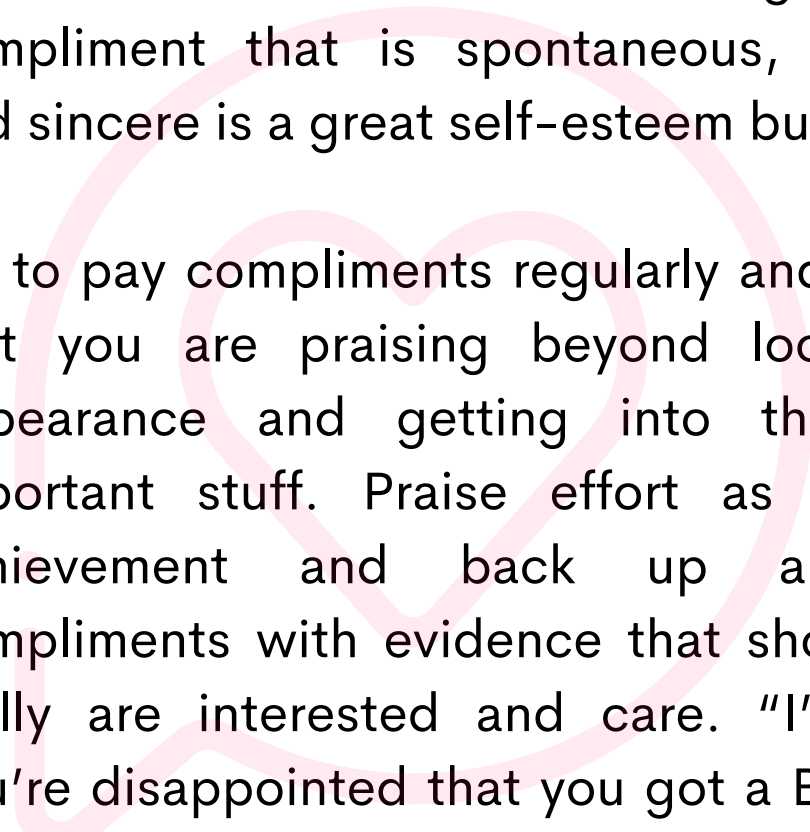




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Pay them meaningful compliments

Compliments are meaningless if they are thrown around without much thought, but a compliment that is spontaneous, specific and sincere is a great self-esteem builder.



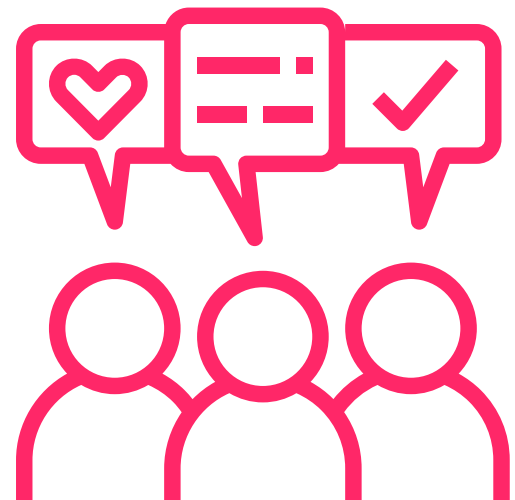
Try to pay compliments regularly and ensure that you are praising beyond looks and appearance and getting into the more important stuff. Praise effort as well as achievement and back up all your compliments with evidence that shows you really are interested and care. "I'm sorry you're disappointed that you got a B in your maths test but I just wanted to tell you how proud I am of you for all the effort you put in. There are clearly some really tricky concepts in there – like those quadratic equations you tried to explain to me – but you just kept on trying until you began to understand. Well done!"



Invite their opinion

Get in the habit of asking your teenager for their opinion on things and be prepared to consider and act upon their views. Many teenagers struggle as they enter an age where they want to feel independent and that they can affect changes in their own life. This can sometimes result in them pushing their family away but by actively inviting, listening to and responding to their opinion we can help them to really feel part of the family unit and realise that they can influence how things are sometimes.

As well as developing better relationships within the family, this is also a great self-esteem builder as it makes a huge difference to us all when we feel our voice is not going unheard.



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