

BEAUTIFUL SAVIOR LUTHERAN SCHOOL

PRESENTS:

PEARLS OF LOVE AND LOGIC

Special Thoughts on Raising Kids

The Masks of Poor Self-Image

People who have a strong self-image feel good about who they are. They have the ability to cope well in school, at home, or on the job. They know how to get along with their co-workers, friends, or family. They have a jump start on life.

Unfortunately, some youngsters grow up without the benefit of strong self-esteem, often because their parents have concentrated more on their weaknesses than their strengths. As teens, they may lack motivation, get poor grades, argue with their parents and teachers, bully their friends, act irresponsibly, or withdraw from social situations. These are some of the masks worn by a teen who suffers from a poor self-image.

The good news is that it is not too late to help these adolescents. Self-concept can be nurtured at any age.

Self-Image is Like a Computer - Rooted in the subconscious mind, an individual's self-image is the result of everything he or she has experienced during a lifetime. As in a computer, the information stored in the subconscious is constantly growing and changing. Like a computer, the subconscious mind cannot tell the difference between right or wrong, real or imagined. Instead, everything is considered fact. In simplest terms, a person's self-image is the sum total of all the positive and negative messages he or she has experienced. Building self-image, then, becomes a matter of shifting the balance of messages and experiences to the positive end of the scale.

Self-Image Builders - Ways that parents unknowingly contribute to their teenager's lack of self-esteem include acting too suspicious, setting up

too many rules, or being overly critical. In place of this, parents are encouraged to help their teen build self-esteem in the following ways:

1. Help teens build on their strengths

An activity or skill that allows an individual to excel does wonders for the self-esteem. Parents need to help their teens identify what interests them and how they can get involved, regardless of whether it's debate, drama, chess, sports, or music.

Wise parents show excitement and enthusiasm about their teen's interests, even if we secretly wish they were involved in some other activity. An important rule to remember is that parents should never tear down, or take away, something that their teen does well.

2. Give fewer rules

Parents often forget that teens are at an age when they need fewer, not more, rules. When we take away too much freedom, we send the message that they are incapable of making good decisions for themselves. This tends to rob teens of growing experiences which teach them they are capable.

3. Emphasize the positive

Parents should remember to give their teens more positive than negative messages. Teens are usually highly sensitive to criticism about their looks, clothes or interests. Criticism tears down a fragile self-image even further.

Build on strengths, give fewer rules, and emphasize the positive

