

Understanding teenagers with low self-esteem

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Understanding Teenagers with Low Self-Esteem What is Self-Esteem? “ Self-esteem is basically the underlying beliefs we have about ourselves (Raising Self Esteem: Interview With the Parenting Professor). ” It is the belief of our capacity and it helps us create our own character. We gather these beliefs as we grow up and encounter people of different traits and are in situations which give you experiences. It helps you gather your own identity. Self-esteem has been called the “ survival of the soul (Rice & company, 2002 Adolescent, Development, Relationships). ” It is what we need to human existence. Self must be considered important to everyone. It grows to small accomplishments, praise and success. We can survive life if we believe in our own capability and not by just giving up on failures. In adolescents’ stage, self-esteem is important for the growth and also for achieving independence of a teen from his/her family or with someone whom he/she depends its strength. Teenagers require enough self-esteem to handle different relationships they build with other people and to handle different situations they encounter. For example, friends are great factors that affect a teenager’s self-esteem and his/her desire to belong in a peer group. Rejection will be the greatest factor that will lower a teenager’s self-esteem. To avoid it, a teenager will do everything to belong to the group. If he/she succeeds, he/she gains self-esteem. If he/she fails, the feeling of weakness, embarrassment and fear of socializing will lower down self-esteem. (Palo Alto Medical Foundation, ND). The strength of an adolescent’s self-esteem is coming from the treatment of the persons present during his/her growth. What the child develops into is a product of his/her growth years. As the child develops, his/her self-esteem is a factor of what he/she will become.

From there you'll understand why the person acts the way he/she does now. The child's development starts from his/her infant years up to the present. According to Clarke (1978), self-esteem starts developing in infants. A new born child develops self-esteem through the touch of his/her parents or guardian. Positive strokes for infants contribute to the building of positive self-esteem from infancy. Touch is important to babies for it is the first medium of communication with the outside world because it is the only way they feel that they are taken care of. To caress babies is said to help them grow healthy and smart. Clarke also said that as the child grows, he/she begins to explore his/her capabilities, trying to be independent and doing things on their own. Proper guidance from parents or guardian will help them develop positive self-esteem. Parents should try to encourage their child to do better. The way a parent addresses to a child is also considered as a factor in developing self-esteem. Speaking to the child with an admiring tone of voice will help. A simple message like " you did that well" is important no matter how little work they have done well. As long as it is delivered in an admiring tone, it helps them do things independently and helps build their positive self-esteem (1978). Negative messages may be sent to children to help improve their behaviour. But if negative messages strike their capabilities, it lessens their confidence and it makes them feel or think that they are incapable of doing things independently. It destroys the self-esteem of a child. For negative messages to become effective there is an alternative way of saying it: " 1. Do not do that... 2. Because... 3. Do this instead... " (Clarke, 1978, p. 7) Parents and guardians play an important role in developing the child's self- esteem. They are the ones who build the

character of the child through the treatment they do. Whoever the child will become is a result of how he/she is raised by the family. But it is not only the child who is built by the self-esteem. Parents and guardian also develops self-esteem through the way they interact with the child. If they want to feel they love the child, they have to be gentle in every little way. And that is where the child feels love and self-esteem develops between them (Clarke, 1978). Factors Affecting Self-Esteem According to Dacey and Kenny (1997), these are the factors that affect the self-esteem of a teen: * The appreciation and the acceptance of teens' ability largely affect the self-esteem. They wanted to be seen in areas where they are good at. If they are doing well in such area, their self-esteem goes high and the more they feel good about themselves. * Opinions, comments, and attention of people around teens also affect their self esteem. If a family or a friend notices you and gives praise about the way you look or how you do something, the more you gain self-esteem. A teen earns self-esteem through positive response of other people. However, destructive comments low down self-esteem. It greatly affects a teen especially in their performance in school or at work. * Racial identity is also important. People judge by race and nationality. If a teen comes from a different race, he/she will isolate him/herself at first because of the feeling that he/she does not belong. Acceptance will help gain the child's self -esteem. * Gender also counts. What has been always considered is that " boys are stronger than girls and girls are weak and must be always taken care of. " For example, in a group of children playing outdoors, boys will do everything to defeat the girls. It will be a shame for him to be defeated by a girl. On the other hand, girls would always want to prove themselves. It is

because that they accept challenges especially if it involves gender competition. Victory of adolescent powers their self-esteem. Relationship of a child to people depends how he/she socialize among the environment where he/she grew. As an experience of being an adolescent, some establish good relationship to others because they can relate with each other and they are comfortable with the company. Some do not like to be with a certain person or group of people just because they do not like mingling with other people. Self-esteem has something to do with your relationship with everyone. Your relationship within your family is also important in building self-esteem. When you are born, you gain self-esteem through the treatment that is given to you. A baby, as mentioned earlier, develops his/her self-esteem through the caress of the people guiding him/her. The baby feels like he/she is capable of living and in response to what the baby is feeling, he/she will grow loving his/her family. Clarke's concept of self-esteem is a family affair (1978). In a family setting, the guardian is always responsible for the growth of the child. It depends on the guardian's attention and care and the treatment of all the family members that builds up the self-esteem of the child. It does not only build the self-esteem of the child, but also the people that surrounds him/her throughout the growth years. Proper parenting builds the positive self-esteem of a child. Whoever is responsible in raising a child contributes in building his/her self-esteem and also the rest of the family members. Presence of guardians is important because their absence will make their child seek for it in their own way. According to Gerber, a parenting professor (2006), low self-esteem occurs when one does not develop a solid internal belief in oneself. As a result, these kids come

from a negative perspective and therefore do not believe in themselves and their abilities. And, any positive feelings they experience comes from the outer world. Self-esteem depends on the " external factors for internal approval" (Gerber, 2006, Raising Self Esteem: Interview with the Parenting Professor). That is why comments, opinions on a person's work or looks is highly given attention. Whatever you say to a person affects him/her greatly. I take my friend for an example. I commented on his profile picture on Facebook, a social networking site, that he looks like the minions in the 2010 movie " Despicable Me" with his eye glasses. I know that I was joking but he took it seriously that he changed his profile picture right away and all the time, he thinks that he does not look good wearing eye glasses. That is an example of how a teen can react on what they think as " negative comments. " Some would take it as a failure on themselves but some would take it as a chance to change for the better. Back to Clarke (1978), positive self-esteem is important because it brings out the best in a person wherein he/she does not need to lie or to pretend to be someone else. They acquire positive characteristics that help them deal with other people. It makes their character likeable. They do not need to compare or to compete with other people because they have enough confidence to believe that they are capable of doing something. From observing children especially in schools, they always sense that they are in a competition with everybody else. They try their best to stand out in a certain activity because for them, winning is a step to independence. They gain more confidence as they win every activity where competition is felt. However, if they lose, tried and lose again, there is likely a great impact on them. They lose confidence and they think that they

can never be good at anything. That is why parents are needed to guide their children and help them build their self-esteem. According to Emma Tan's book, it is normal for children to feel down and depressed every time (1989). In order for them to feel comforted and loved, allow them to talk and listen to them. This is what a child needed most. It is important that you show your care for him/her and that you value the presence they give. It builds positivity for the child. Presence of a guardian will help the kid develop their capabilities and believe in them. When a teen grows up, his/her self-esteem is also affected by his/her friends. With puberty, adolescents began to explore their own capabilities alone. They want to be accepted by peers because they are starting to do things independently with the approval of friends and without the care of the family. They are self-conscious that makes them vulnerable to embarrassment (Rice & company, 2002). But, according to Warren Schibles (1989), another problem of man is improving their human character. Before that, we need to understand first how man's emotions work. But, it is not common among us to make an effort in understanding a man's personality that is why a man keeps what they feel. Physical and psychological harm will be the result of this because of the negative emotions they feel. Self-esteem is critical to come from within. For example, after taking exam in Social Science 2 subject, my classmate felt that she is going to fail on the subject but i kept on cheering her up and said that we were all going to pass the subject. It did not get her any better because she said from how she answered the exam, it really was not good to pass. To raise self-esteem, opinions, comments or praises from people around must be realistic for it to take effect on the person (Gerber, 2006).

Making a person feel better is not easy when he/she knows within him/herself it will not do any better. Adolescence and Their Self-Esteem Adolescence is the complicated part of life (Koenig, 2008). It is the moment where teens have a lot of insecurities that causes conflicts among friends and families. Parents would find their children a lot more complicated because of these insecurities. And problems and issues in the relationship of the child to the people will be tested. Based on my own experience and also with my friends' sharings, when a teen is scolded often times about a certain issue, he/she intends to disobey the parent and keep whatever is happening in his/her life. As much as possible, parents should treat their teen like they support his/her decisions. They are just there to guide him/her. If parents show that they are supportive, they may have an open relationship with each other. He/she will share what happened in her whole day, may it be good or bad. At least, parents would still have the chance to monitor their teens' activities and guide them or give them advices whenever they are feeling down or giving up. Adolescence is the stage where the child transforms into an adult. It is a critical stage where they struggle for independence and maturing from how they had been self-centered from childhood to becoming a person having self-identity that would be helping in building relationships (Shelterwood, ND). That is why sometimes you feel your child is rebellious if you try to stop them from anything they want. They are starting to believe that they should only depend on their own decisions and opinions. They want to be trusted and somehow appreciated by these decisions. From a research of Hair and his company (2002), as a teen matures, it is the time for him/her to use the social skills he/she earned and

use this to maintain relationship he/she has. Many other relationships are built and they come in different types. A teen establishes a different kind of relationship with his/her friends and to his/her family. The social relationship that he/she is establishing comes with a greater responsibility of maintaining it. As an observation, teens build many relationships at the adolescence stage. It is because belonging to a new community mostly happens in this stage. This is where friendships, romantic relationships and many other relationships are being tested. But most of all, the love the parents will bring the teen to more confidence with themselves because they will feel more important and capable of living. The presence and the guidance of parents are needed to make the teen feel that what they are doing is essential. It is not a waste for them to experience things needed to be experienced by a teen. A wholesome relationship will be the result if parents understand that teenagers are now growing up and they should respond not only to the basic needs but also to the emotional, social and mental needs of the child.

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