

## Teenagers Anxiety over their Appearance

Teenagers are usually not satisfied with their appearance and many seem to constantly be concerned about how they look. It is a natural thing for teenagers to be concerned about how they look, which parents often do not hear when their child is younger. As teenagers enter puberty, their bodies go through a lot of changes and physically their body changes and as a consequence this changes their outward appearance. Whether a teenager views the change in their body as positive or negative affects a teenager's body image or how they view their physical appearance. The ability to develop a healthy body image takes a little bit of time and there are a number of factors that influence a teenager's view of their body. Of course their opinion is tantamount, however family, friends, and what message society sends as a whole really seems to matter. Today's culture is saturated with advertising that sends the message to everyone that having perfect looks is very important. When children are teased or made fun over their physical appearance, this has a very negative affect for children and is very harmful to their self-image.

Being satisfied with one's physical appearance is not always an easy thing. Teenagers that have a negative self-image will tend to compare themselves to other children and make self-critical statements that causes them significant distress or anxiety. However, children with a positive self-image will usually become very self-conscious about their physical appearance and want to be able to portray a certain image to those around them. They will always want to look "just right."

So how do we encourage children that have either a positive or negative self-image to have a body image that is healthy and appropriate. We as parents do not want to send the message that physical appearance is everything and that other things in life do not matter. Here are a few suggestions for parents on how to encourage a healthy body-image:

First, we need to be patient and understanding when our teenager comes home with black lipstick, black pants, or clothes that seem to be a little too big for them. Girls may want to try some type of new hairdo that you as a parent do not particularly care for and the best thing to do here is to not make a huge deal about it and try to empathize with what they are going through. If your teenager is trying to convince you of a new tattoo or shaving their head, that is something that you as a parent will have to discuss and decide as a parent. Some parents will let their teenagers do this and some will not. Be supportive of your teenager and remember that where your teenager is currently, you have been there yourself.

Talk about what appearances mean. Do not emphasize that looks are everything. What is on the inside really is that important. Deeper qualities or the character of a person are really what sustain us in life. Talk to your child about what message their physical appearance sends to those around them. For example, wearing excessive makeup or a low-cut top for girls, or pants

that around your teenager's son knees with their boxers showing. This does send a message to everyone around them. Discuss this message with your teenager.

Avoid being overly critical of the time that your teenager is spending looking at themselves in the mirror. The more you criticize or complain that they seem to be obsessed about their looks, the more likely your teenager will be to want to emphasize their looks. Remember, your teenager is just trying to find their way in life right now and trying to fit in with their peers.

Give your child positive feedback. Teenagers do require a lot of compliments and how they look. We want to emphasize the qualities that they have on the inside such as honesty, how they treat others, etc... but don't forget to compliment how they look or what they are wearing. This is really a big deal to your teenager, however they are likely to downplay your compliment like it is no big deal.

Set a time limit on exactly how much time your teenager can spend looking at themselves, getting ready in the bathroom, and on their grooming. You as a parent do not want your teenager spending hours in the bathroom getting ready for the day.

Above all, be an excellent role model for your child. If a parent spends a lot of time concerned over their looks or talks about something about themselves that they do not like, then your child will likely do the same thing. Remember, a positive body-image takes time and patience with your teenager will serve you well.

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