



GCAPP PARENT TOOLKIT:

Boosting My Child's Self Esteem

Establishing a loving, stable relationship from early on is one of the best foundations for navigating the ups and downs of the teenage years. According to AACAP, parents can prepare by:

- Providing a safe, stable, and loving home environment
- Fostering an atmosphere of honesty, mutual trust, and respect
- Allowing age-appropriate independence and assertiveness
- Developing a relationship where teens feel comfortable coming to you when upset
- Teaching responsibility for personal and shared belongings
- Assigning basic household chores and obligations
- Reinforcing the importance of accepting limits

These practices, when started early and consistently, help children feel secure, valued, and connected. Making it easier for them to open-up, make healthy decisions, and lean on their parents when challenges arise.

Things to Consider

It is common for teens to experiment as they figure out their identity. They may change their values, interests, hairstyles, or clothing this is typically a normal part of adolescence. However, ongoing inappropriate, risky, or harmful behavior can be a sign of a deeper problem.

Some teens are more vulnerable to self-destructive behaviors, especially if they struggle with low self-esteem, mental health concerns, or family difficulties. Risky behaviors may include experimenting with drugs or alcohol, having unprotected sex, or engaging in unsafe activities. Depression, anxiety, and eating disorders are also common challenges during adolescence. Parents should stay observant, maintain open communication, and seek professional help if they notice persistent warning signs or behaviors that put their teen's health and safety at risk.

Warning Signs That Your Teen May Be Having a Problem

While some changes in mood and behavior are a normal part of adolescence, certain patterns may signal that your child needs extra support. According to AACAP, parents should be alert to the following warning signs:

- Agitated, restless, or irritable behavior
- Noticeable weight loss or gain
- Sudden drop in grades or school performance
- Difficulty concentrating or completing tasks
- Persistent sadness or withdrawal from others
- Loss of interest in people, activities, or hobbies once enjoyed
- Lack of motivation or increased apathy
- Fatigue, low energy, or sleep difficulties
- Low self-esteem or frequent negative self-talk
- Run-ins with authority figures or the law

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If these behaviors last for **more than a few weeks**, worsen **over time**, or **interfere with daily life**, it may be time to seek help from a **mental health professional**. Early support can make a significant difference in a teen's well-being.

If you suspect something is wrong, start by keeping **communication open** and **supportive**.

Gently ask your teen what is bothering them and listen without judgment. Avoid ignoring warning signs or hoping the issue will resolve on its own. Early action is important. Begin by reaching out to your child's doctor, who can help determine whether further evaluation or support is needed.

Additional resources may include school counselors, mental health professionals, or community programs. Taking concerns seriously and seeking help shows your teen that they are not alone and that their well-being matters.

- **Talk:** Keep communication open. Ask your teen gently about what is bothering them.
- **Listen:** Pay attention without judgment. Let them share their feelings and experiences.
- **Observe:** Watch for ongoing changes in mood, behavior, or daily habits. Don't ignore warning signs.
- **Seek Help:** Start with your child's doctor, who can guide you to additional resources. This may include school counselors, mental health professionals, or community programs.
- **Support:** Show your teen they are not alone and that their well-being matters. Early action can make a big difference.



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