

# STEPS TO SAFETY

## Self-Esteem and Personal Power

Self-esteem is how we feel about ourselves, and our behavior reflects those feelings. Adolescence is a time when self-esteem may be unstable or negative.

Some of the benefits of positive self-esteem include:

- ✈ Acting responsibly and independently
- ✈ The ability to handle frustrations and emotions
- ✈ A sense of pride in one's accomplishments

These may help make your teen less vulnerable to unsafe situations. Positive self-talk is a useful tool to reframe a negative into a positive. Parents can model this with their teens. For example, if your teen says, "I'm so dumb!" you could say, "You're still learning. I know you'll get it." Positive reinforcement and descriptive praise have a great impact on your teen's self-esteem as well.

Introduce the concept of personal power to your teen. Personal power is one of the tools we have to help us make the safe decisions that help others and ourselves. Help your teen understand that they have personal power. By using their personal power, your teen can:

- ✈ Learn to set their personal boundaries
- ✈ Recognize unsafe situations
- ✈ Use their power to say "no" and get help

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### How to Build Self-Esteem in Your Teen and Help Them Use Their Personal Power

#### ✈ Step 1

Share some of the words that describe positive characteristics: funny, pretty, fun, cute, sweet, kind, strong, thoughtful, and smart. Remind your teen that everyone has positive characteristics that make them unique, and that how they feel about themselves builds or damages their self-esteem. Self-esteem is important because it enables them to use their personal power in a positive way to help them and others stay safe.

#### ✈ Step 2

Ask your teen to make a list of their positive qualities. Are they generous? Kind? Funny? They should write down at least 10 positive qualities.

#### ✈ Step 3

Ask your teen to list some characteristics they like in others and that they also have. Ask your teen how someone who cares about them might describe them. What does your teen think their friends like best about them? What do their friends say they like about your teen? What compliments would your teen give themselves? What do they like about who they are?

Encourage your teen to make these positive affirmations a part of their internal dialogue. A strong sense of self will help your teen develop their personal power.

#### ✈ Step 4

Discuss with your teen how they can focus on their accomplishments. Teens need to learn how to forgive themselves for their mistakes, focus on the positive, and embrace their own uniqueness. Help your teen to understand that it would be boring if we were all the same, and that there's no one else like them in the world.