

Be Positive!

Help Your Child Develop a Positive Identity

During the teenage years, your child is developing an identity. He is figuring out:

- ◆ Who he wants to become.
- ◆ What he thinks is important in life.
- ◆ What he believes is right and wrong.

These are difficult but necessary matters for him to decide. Good choices lead to becoming a productive, happy adult. Poor decisions lead to a troubled future.



By Tampa 1
Prodigy
Artist Holly

During this time, your child cares a lot about what his friends think about him. Getting others to like him and feel part of a group is very important. As he tries to fit in, he may change the way he dresses or acts. He may do things that do not seem to be what he usually would do. You may find yourself saying: *"That's not like you..."*

This strong need for approval may lead to poor behavior. Your child may be willing to do whatever it takes to gain acceptance. This may include ignoring rules, challenging authority, skipping school, staying out late and fighting. More serious delinquent behaviors may include driving while intoxicated, using illegal drugs, joining a gang and shoplifting.

In addition to wanting to belong and be liked, these behaviors may be caused by:

- ◆ A desire to be different from you (his parents).
- ◆ Confused priorities.
- ◆ Lack of judgment skills.
- ◆ Not knowing who or what he wants to be.

This is your chance to help your child develop a positive identity.

Be Positive!

Your child may struggle with developing an identity. You can guide him toward figuring out what type of person he wants to be or who he wants to become. Ask him questions like the following and don't interrupt him. Discuss his answers and help him make good decisions.

- ◆ Who do you admire? Why?
 - ◇ What do you like about what they do or say?
 - ◇ How do you think they got where they are?
- ◆ What does "being a good person" mean?
- ◆ What does being successful mean?
- ◆ Who is the most successful person in the world? How did they get to be so successful?
- ◆ What sort of friends do you like to have?
 - ◇ How do you choose them?
 - ◇ What does it mean to be a good friend?
 - ◇ Would you rather be more like your friends or have them be more like you?
 - ◇ Who is the most popular person at school? Why? Is that a good reason to be well-liked?
- ◆ What do you like about yourself?
- ◆ What do others like about you?
- ◆ Do you agree with the things that are important to us (your parents)?
- ◆ Will you get married? What do you want that person to be like?
- ◆ Will you have children? What do you want them to be like?
- ◆ Will you take certain academic or vocational classes in high school?
- ◆ Will you go to college?
- ◆ What sort of future job would be interesting?
 - ◇ What would you like about it?
 - ◇ What would you not like about it?
 - ◇ What do you have to do now to prepare for it?



The Florida Department of Juvenile Justice

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