

Affirmations for Teens

As parents (and teachers), it can become a basic instinct to notice where a teenager needs improvement. How we can assist them in becoming the best that they can be and so we focus on what is missing. Shifting that thinking a bit and focusing on what is there instead of what is missing can have a positive effect on influencing your teen to foster change or motivate them to improve. **◇Focus on the Donut, not the hole.** As children are recognized for what they are doing that is correct and are acknowledged for it, they become more aware of what is right rather than what is wrong with their behavior thus improving their sense of self.

◇Never do for your or provide for your teen that which he or she can do for him/herself.

~When you do, you rob your child of the joy of discovery and the opportunity to feel competent. You will never know what your child is capable of unless you allow him/her to try!

Supporting a positive view of “self”, can be supported by parents. They can provide their teen with love and unconditional acceptance, but they can also help them feel competent and capable. This can be done by first allowing your teen to **experience** what it is like to discover, figure out, and problem-solve. As the child grows, there become more opportunities to allow for this experience. Parents can show their faith in their teen and their capabilities by allowing them to struggle with a problem, all the while providing encouragement. This means **◇acknowledging their efforts** vs. praising their accomplishments (i.e. You are working hard to figure this out, you tried some things that didn’t work but you keep trying to find another solution, etc.). For most parents, allowing their teen to struggle is hard – but a necessary process for them to truly feel capable.

Remember when your teen was a preschooler and was given a puzzle to put together. As a parent, you knew where the pieces should go but allowing the child to put together the puzzle by him/herself allowed them to feel a sense of accomplishment. Experience is the best teacher. **◇Never do for your or provide for your teen that which he or she can do for him/herself.**

Parents can help their teens to develop a positive view of themselves as competent and capable by responding in ways that give their teen credit for ideas, effort and accomplishments without praising.

Esteem-building responses:

“You figured it out”

“You did it!”

“You liked the way that turned out.”

“You decided...”

“You’re not giving up, you are determined to figure that out.”

“You’ve got a plan for how...”

As parents, you can participate in their problem solving by engaging in their active brainstorming for solutions. Instead of giving them the answer that you know will get to the solution quicker. They need to practice problem solving. You can walk with them as they brainstorm by reflecting what you hear them discovering or deciding.

Example: Your daughter has to put together her high school class schedule for next semester. You know what classes she should take that will allow her the best chances to get into the schools that you hope for her. You let her know she is creating the schedule. You might say, “So where are you on deciding your classes for next semester?” Allow your daughter to tell you where she is in the process. “I am still deciding – I haven’t figured it out yet”. You can join her in the process. “Mmmmm. It can be overwhelming to figure that out. What are you for sure about?” Allow for her to answer and reflect what you hear. “So you know you need another math, but you struggled this year and you don’t really want to take the advanced math. Mmmm. What did your math teacher have to say about that? What friends do you have that have taken that math class?”

In this situation, the parents might know that a certain math would be best for their teen but allowing their teen to explore and come to the conclusion on their own, will allow them to own the decision to be in that math. A parent can offer support and encouragement to set their teen up for success but brainstorm with them first so that the answers are their own and not yours. This provides them a sense of accomplishment and a sense of self.

As you notice more about the world of your teen, you will become better equipped to offer affirmations. **◇Always attach an incident to a positive character quality.** A teen is more likely to own that positive characteristic if an example is used that “proves” they are living it.

Example: “You are a compassionate friend. I saw how you stayed with him when you first got to the party because you knew he didn’t know many people.”

“You are a good sport. I saw how you high fived each of your teammates after you lost the match.

◇ -indicates a “parenting gem” – we are all diamonds in the rough. Using “parenting gems” can allow your teen to shine with their own brilliance.

Choice Giving for Teens

Teens need parental guidance and discipline. In many instances, parents make decisions for their teens. Parents can provide their teens with some measure of control by providing choices and allowing their teens to make decisions that will benefit them or not (natural consequences).

Family rules can be established as a family. Over the years these rules are often unspoken – i.e. In our family we don't quit a sport until the season is ended. If you want to spend money, you must earn money. If you want to hang out with your friends at our house, you must be sure the house is in order before your friends come over. Etc.

Sometimes new rules are set in place or old ones are resurrected because they have been forgotten. When family members are given the opportunity to make choices and accept the consequences, they become better equipped at making choices.

Parents can aid in this process by reminding their teens of their choices and enforcing (sometimes at their own expense) the natural consequences to their son or daughter's choice.

As a parent acknowledges the choice for being responsible and attaches it to a privilege, the teen begins to easily associate the honor of their privileges and their ability to participate in enjoying them. For example, "you chose to get the car back in the garage by midnight, and so you chose to use it again tomorrow night." Before going out, there can be a reminder, "If you **choose** to get the car back by midnight, you **choose** to use the car tomorrow night. If you **choose** NOT to get the car in the garage by midnight, you **choose** NOT use the car tomorrow night." *Notice the word "choice" is used FOUR times.* This allows for all choices and after effects of those choices to be clear. When parents acknowledged these choices they must also be ready to stand firm on the results of the choices. For example, if their son or daughter does not choose to get the car home by midnight (no matter what the excuse might be), the parent must reflect the choice and its result. "I see you chose not to get the car back in the garage by midnight and so you chose not to use it tonight". Parents will face their teen begging and pleading and possibly crying to get to use the car – don't cave.....acknowledge their pain. "I can see you are upset that you can't use the car but when you chose not to bring it home on time, you chose not to use it tonight. This allows them to notice their choices and consequences and relieves you of the control battle that can be had if you are simply the keeper of the keys and the controller of all the fun (or not).

Choice giving sounds easy but it can get complicated. Practicing in small ways is beneficial. If you choose to clean your room, you choose to play video games, if you choose not to clean your room, you choose not to play video games. Your teen might choose NOT to clean their room and live with the choice of not playing video games. So now the parent has to live with the messy room until the choice is made to clean the room.

Establishing what the choices and privileges are ahead of time alleviates the danger of choice giving to become threats. Organizing important family rules and the privileges that can be attached to them and discussing them as a family can be helpful when no one person is emotionally flooded.

Re-establishing new family rules will require patience and understanding by all. If you have normally just given your kids money when they want it and now you want them to earn it, you must be patient with the process of finding a job or creating a list of daily jobs that will help them earn spending money. Choices and consequences to these choices can help to support your new family rule.

When reinforcing consequences or setting limits, it is important to remember three important steps: FIRST: Communicate your understanding, SECOND: Reinforce the limit/consequence, THIRD: Provide alternatives.

Example: I can see you are upset you cannot use the car tonight, you really wanted to go to the football game tonight, but you chose not to get the car home by midnight so you chose not to use the

car tonight. Next week you can choose to get home by midnight and then you can choose to go to next week's game.

Are you cringing? We all want our children to be comfortable and do fun things that they feel are important. This choice giving practice when done consistently is soon replaced by better choices by your teen because they will want to use the privileges that have been freely given but now are attached to the choices that they are making. It is difficult at first but most teens learn quickly the consequences and what to avoid.

◇This choice giving method is best used in combination with Affirmations of teens and Love Maps (knowing the details of you son or daughter's world).

Guidelines for choice giving in relation to limit setting and consequences:

- Enforce consequence **without fail** and **without anger**.
- Consequence is for "today" only – each day should be a chance for a fresh start; a chance to use internal resources to control "self" and make a different decision.
- Reflect your son or daughter's choice with empathy, but remain firm. Consistency and follow through are critical.
- Communicate choices in a "matter-of-fact" voice – power struggles are likely to result your teen hears frustration or anger in their parent's voices and believes the parent is invested in one choice over another. Teen must be free to choose consequence for noncompliance.

Caution: Once your teen is emotionally flooded, it is difficult or impossible for them to hear and process a choice. This is an opportunity for parents to reflect what teen is feeling (see feelings list) and allow time for them to "cool off" before further processing choice giving.

AFRAID
Alarmed
Apprehensive
Cautious
Desperate
Defensive
Dread
Fearful
Foreboding
Frightened
Guarded
Intimidated
Mistrustful
Nervous
Panicked
Petrified
Reluctant
Scared
Shy
Stunned
Suspicious
Terrified
Timid
Overwhelmed
Vulnerable
Wary
Worried

ANGRY
Abused
Agitated
Aggravated
Annoyed
Boiling
Cranky
Enraged
Exasperated
Exploited
Frustrated
Fuming
Furious
Harassed
Hateful
Hostile
Humiliated
Incensed
Indignant
Infuriated
Irate
Irk
Irritated
Livid
Mad
Outraged
Patronized
Peeved
Perturbed
Pissed (off)
Provoked
Rebellious
Resentful

Sabotaged
Steamed
Stifled
Upset
Used
Vengeful
Vindictive
ANXIOUS
Apprehensive
Concerned
Disquieted
Distressed
Disturbed
Fearful
Ill at ease
Nervous
Perturbed
Restless
Stressed
Tense
Tormented
Troubled
Uneasy
Worked up
Worried
CALM/GOOD
at ease
at peace
balanced
collected
composed
contented
harmonious
in harmony
in balance
peaceful
quiet
relaxed
relieved
serene
soothed
tranquil
unmoved
unruffled
CONFIDENT
Able
Able-bodied
Bold
Certain
Competent
Complete
Empowered
Fulfilled hopeful
Open
Positive
Proud
Safe
Satisfied
secure
Steady
Sure

CONFUSED
Ambivalent
Awkward
Baffled
Bewildered
Bothered
Caught
Conflicted
Dazed
Directionless
Disorganized
Distracted
Distrustful
Doubtful
Dull
Flustered
Foggy
Hesitant
Immobilized
indecisive
Lost
Misunderstood
Mystified
Perplexed
Pessimistic
Puzzled
Stagnant
Stuck
Torn
Trapped
Troubled
Uncertain
Undecided
Uneasy
Unsettled
Unsure
DISCONNECTED
Alienated
Alone
Aloof
Apathetic
Bored
Cold
Detached
Distant
Distracted
Indifferent
Lonely
Numb
Perplexed
Removed
Ungrounded
Uninterested
Upset
Withdrawn worked
up
DISINTERESTED
Bored
Cold
Indifferent
Insensitive

Lifeless
Neutral
Preoccupied
Reserved
Tired
Weary
DISTURBED
Agitated
Alarmed
Discombobulated
Disconcerted
Perturbed
Rattled
Restless
Shocked
Startled
Surprised
Troubled
Uncomfortable
Uneasy
unnerved
Unsettled
upset
EXCITED
Amazed
Astonished
Eager
Energetic
Enthusiastic
Invigorated
Lively
Passionate
Vibrant
FATIGUED
Beat
Burnt out
Depleted
Exhausted
Lethargic
Listless
Sleepy
Tired
Weary
Worn out
GRATEFUL
Appreciative
Moved
Thankful
Touched
GUILTY
Ashamed
Chagrin
Condemned
Conscience-stricken
Contrite
Convicted
Culpable
Criminal
Embarrassed
Illegitimate
Mortified

Penitent
Punished
Remorseful
Resentful shame
sinful
Wicked
HAPPY
Alive
Appreciated
Cheerful
Confident
Delighted
Ecstatic
Elated
Encouraged
Energized
Enthusiastic
Excited
Fulfilled
Grateful
Gratified
Hopeful
Joyful
Jubilant
Optimistic
Pleased
Relieved
Satisfied
Thrilled
Uplifted
HOPEFUL
Eager
Expectant
Encouraged
Optimistic
Positive
Upbeat
HURT
Aching
Agonized
Aggrieved
Alienated
Anguished
Cut
Battered
Bereaved
Bruised
Crushed
Damaged
Devastated
Grief-stricken
Heartbroken
Humiliated
Injured
Lonely
Miserable
Pained
Punished
stabbed
Tortured
Traumatized

Wronged
Wounded
LOVE
Acceptance
Adoration
Adulation
Affinity
Agape
Attachment
Closeness
Connection
Devotion
Fondness
Friendliness
Infatuation
Intimacy
Kindness/kindly
Liking
Passion
Regard
Trust
NUMBNESS
Apathetic
Callous
Chilled
Dazed
Dead
Drugged
Empty
Hardened
Inured
Insensitive
Paralyzed
Shocked
Stunned
uninterested
Unemotional
PLEASURE
Amused
Bliss
Contented
Delight
Ecstasy
Enjoyment
Euphoria
Glad
Happy
joyful
Jubilant
Satisfaction
Thrill
Tickled
REGRETFUL
Ashamed
Apologetic
Bitter
Disillusioned
Guilty
Humbled
Remorseful
Sorrowful

Sorry
RELIEVED
Appeased
Calmed
Comforted
Consoled
Freshened
Rested
Restored
Pacified
Soothed
SAD
Abandoned
Alienated
Defeated
Dejected
Demoralized
Depressed
Despondent
Devastated
Disillusioned
Disappointed
Discouraged
Disheartened
Dismayed
Down drained
Empty
Forlorn
Gloomy
Heavy-hearted
Helpless
Hopeless
Hurt
Lonely
Melancholy
Miserable
Mournful
Pessimistic
Pitiful
Rejected
Sorrowful
Tearful
Unappreciated
Uncared for
Unhappy
Unwanted
Wounded
Wretched
STRESSED
Anxious
Cranky
Distressed
Distraught
Edgy
Fidgety
Frazzled
Irritable
Jittery
Nervous
Overwhelmed
Restless

Stressed out
Tense
STRONG
Able
Capable
Certain
Competent
Earnest
Enduring firm fixed
Hardy invulnerable
Keen mighty
muscular
Prepared
Secure
Sound
sturdy
Sure
Unyielding
Unbeatable
VULNERABLE
Empty
Fatigued
fragile
Guarded
Helpless
Hesitant
Incapable
Inferior
Insecure
Leery
Overwhelmed
Paralyzed
Pathetic
Sensitive
Shaky
WEAK
Anemic
Debilitated
Dismayed
Engulfed
Faint
Feeble
Flaccid
Fragile
guarded
Helpless
Hopeless
Incapacitated
Incompetent
Lame
limp
Insecure
Overcome
overpowered
Overwhelmed
Sensitive
Shaky
Spineless
Swamped
Wimpy
Wishy-washy

Dr. John Gottman has been researching relationships for over 30 years. He has become an expert in the field of married couples and parent child relationships because of his research and what he has learned from this research. One of the things he has learned is that those that “get it right” in relationships are intimately familiar with the lives of those they love, they know the nitty gritty details of the lives of their loved ones.

He called this intimate knowledge a Love Map. He encourages all relationships to create Love Maps for each other. How you do it is quite simple, although not always successfully done in relationships. We simply must ask questions. Asking deep questions brings out important things about a person’s thoughts, feelings and values. You can’t just ask these questions once. Our worlds are changing every day – our likes and dislikes change based on our experience. Children’s lives change even more rapidly. Parents can easily become disconnected from what is happening and important in their child’s life. Children feel supported and empowered when parents respect their preferences, interests, wishes, and fantasies. Updating these Love Maps on a regular basis is a key to fostering an intimate relationship with your growing daughters.

Below are some questions to help you continue with the Love Maps you have already started with your children. The key is to ask the questions and then listen carefully to their responses. Listening is a difficult skill to perfect. Your curiosity about their answers will guide the process.

Kids Love Map

By Dr. John Gottman (Author of Raising an Emotionally Intelligent Child)

Answer as many of the questions as you can. Write your answers in the space provided. If you have more than one child go through questions for each child. Check your answers with your children by asking them and listening for their possible updates.

What is your child’s favorite food?

Who is your child’s best friend?

Who would they like to be friends with if they could?

Who are their rivals, competitors or enemies?

What important event occurred recently for your child?

What is your child looking forward to?

What are some current stresses in your child's life right now?

What does your child want to be when they grow up?

Who is your child's favorite band/singer?

What is your child's favorite TV show?

What gets on your child's nerves?

What is your child's favorite thing to do?

What is one thing your child is wishing for right now?

What was your child's most embarrassing moment?

How does your child like to relax?

What makes your child laugh?

CHILD-PARENT-RELATIONSHIP (C-P-R) TRAINING

Positive Character Qualities - Session 7

accountable	affectionate	appreciative	assertive
brave	careful	caring	clever
compassionate	confident	considerate	cooperative
courageous	courteous	creative	decisive
dependable	determined	direct	empathic
enjoyable	enthusiastic	energetic	feeling
forgiving	friendly	fun	generous
gentle	goal oriented	good sport	grateful
helpful	honest	humble	idealistic
insightful	intelligent	inventive	joyful
kind	loving	loyal	modest
neat	orderly	outgoing	patient
peaceful	persistent	polite	purposeful
punctual	quiet	reliable	resourceful
respectful	responsible	self-assured	self-controlled
self-disciplined	sensitive	sincere	smart
supportive	tactful	team player	tenacious
thoughtful	tolerant	trustworthy	truthful