

Self-Awareness Tips

Help Your Teen Express Their Feelings

Provide your high schooler with ways to express their feelings and think about their experiences. One option is to encourage them to write frequently. They can write in a journal, on their computer, or even in a password-protected blog. Promise not to read their writing if your child doesn't want you to, and keep that promise. As your teen transitions to young adulthood, they may be less likely to share all their thoughts and feelings with you. Giving them an outlet to write their emotions allows them time for self-reflection and further develops their self-awareness.

Model Self-Awareness by Talking About Your Own Feelings Often

At family dinners, during commutes, or whenever you can, talk with your teen and let them know how you're feeling and why. For example, you might say, "I'm getting a bit anxious for the holidays already. While I'm excited to spend time with the family, I'm nervous about taking time away from work and having even more to do when I get back." By creating an opportunity to discuss your feelings, you're letting your teen see your emotions and that you are comfortable talking about feelings. This provides a safe place to talk with you about what they're feeling, too.

Talk to Your High Schooler About Their Plans for the Future

Discuss potential career, personal or higher-education goals with your teen. Ask them questions like, "Which class is your favorite right now? Do you think you'd like to explore careers where you could use what you're learning in that class every day? What are your strengths?" Helping your teen identify their strengths and their challenges in an open discussion can get them thinking about ways to further develop those skills into adulthood. Also talk about personal goals by asking, "Who do you look up to, and what makes them admirable?" Perhaps they have a mentor at school who is kind and thoughtful. Your teen is not just dealing with their educational and professional future; they're also learning more about themselves. Try asking, "What's your favorite book you've read for class recently?" You may find you both liked the same book in English class, which provides an opportunity to further connect with your teen.

Talk About Labels with Your Teen

Education consultant Jennifer Miller recommends talking about labels and stereotypes that go along with them. Do peers call your teen a "jock" or a "geek?" Does your teen use those terms to discuss other classmates? Give an example of how labels can be limiting and how someone your child might think is a "nerd" can also be so much more than that. Also, be aware of your own language when talking about your teen with friends and family. Try to not use labels when talking about them, as it can be harmful or hurtful to teens who are trying to build their own identities.

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