

# 5 WAYS TO BUILD SELF-ESTEEM IN TEENAGE GIRLS



**Debs Peake**



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Self-esteem impacts everything we do and is central to who we are. Many of our teenage girls are struggling with it and the impact of low self-esteem is immense. It affects how they see themselves, their relationships with others and the decisions that they make. Whether you are a parent or someone who works with teenage girls professionally, here are some top tips to help them build their self-esteem and to know their worth.



### LISTEN TO THEM WITHOUT JUDGEMENT

Like most of us, teenage girls want to feel heard and understood. The key here is to take the time to really listen, without judgement and with an open mind. Comments like 'I didn't think you were like that!' or 'that's the wrong way to look at things' can be judgemental, and the last thing a teenage girl struggling with low self-esteem needs is to be put down. What are the ways you can lift her up? Your opinion may differ, and that is okay. The trick is to set your own thoughts to one side and refrain from projecting what you think.



A helpful tip is to consider your body language. 70% of how we communicate is through our body. Crossed arms or standing up while they're sitting down can be off-putting and reduce the likelihood of meaningful dialogue.



*What I enjoy about being here is being able to say my opinion with no judgement.*



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## TAKE AN INTEREST IN THEIR LIVES



Being interested in the lives of teenage girls helps them to feel seen. Feeling seen can do wonders for self-esteem. A few good questions around her interests and life can be helpful here, even if what she enjoys isn't naturally interesting to you. Open questions are best rather than questions requiring a 'yes' or 'no' response. I often ask follow on questions when a participant has given factual information such as 'can you tell me a bit more about that?' or 'what is it about horse-riding that you love so much?'

It is worth adding that too many questions in a row can feel like prying, which can cause them to shut down, so keep this in mind. If they don't want to share too much, let it go and follow their lead. Silence is okay sometimes too. Building trust takes time. Chances are they may be more willing next time.

*What I love about the Know Your Worth course is that it gives me an hour and half in my day to really come to terms with my emotions. I'm learning that none of my emotions are negative - they are all valuable.*

- DEVINA, 16

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## CALL OUT THE GOOD



All of us have strengths and areas where we excel. What good can you call out in others? Sometimes it can be the simplest things; noticing that she has done something kind for someone else or has a raw talent that you can see coming to the surface. If self-esteem is low, she may not see it yet. Say what you see. It is one of the most beautiful privileges to speak truth into the life of a teenage girl, and see it resonate immediately with her. If you look closely enough, you will see what she doesn't.

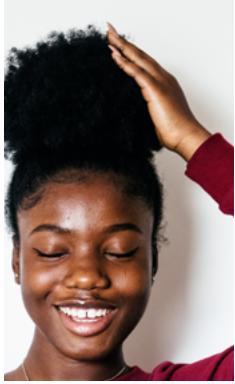
In *Know Your Worth*, I talk about dreams, hopes, skills and interests. One girl was sharing about something she was struggling with and off the back of that conversation I asked her about what she enjoys. When she began to explain basketball to me, her face lit up, her body shifted, and her mood followed. I said what I saw and she laughed. It resonated.

A really helpful way to encourage this is to create a list of skills and character strengths, ideally with some things on there that you already know she is strong in. You can go through these together pulling out her strengths, and then maybe adding more that come up onto the end when you discuss them together.

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## ENCOURAGE NEW THINGS

Trying new things can feel a bit strange or uncertain. Doing things that take us out of our comfort zone can feel awkward at the beginning, but can ultimately lead to growth.



Sometimes, social media and phone usage really seem to take over and can become a comfort blanket for teenagers. Having a phone to hold on to can really put them at ease and sometimes that's okay. It can however mean they miss things in the here and now, so the key is to offer them something better during your time together. This could be connected to their tick list of things they enjoy and are good at. The good news is that it's never too late to find out what we are good at or what we might enjoy, and this is where trying something new comes in. Accomplishing things or giving things a go can be a real catalyst for building self-esteem. This is where confidence can really flourish over time.

Could you try something new with her? We can't expect teenagers to do things if we aren't willing to take on some challenges for ourselves too. Even better if we don't take ourselves too seriously and can have a laugh in the process!

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## MODEL IT YOURSELF

The teenage girls that you may know, parent or work with will be looking to you. How do you act when stressed or upset? How do you process emotions? Often, we see physical mannerisms play out in children that are so like those of their parents. Hand movements when they talk or sayings that they utter, simply because that's what they have seen or heard regularly over time. Influence isn't just solely during those formative early years.



Many teenage girls, especially those not quite at home yet in their own skin, will be looking around for social proof and how others behave and are in the world. So much of what they observe you and others (such as peers) doing will impact them. What are you doing to help build your own self-esteem?

*The value that you give yourself often predetermines the value others give you.*

Don't underestimate the power that you hold in influencing her. If she knows you, in any capacity, you have a role to play in helping her flourish. In guiding others into and through a stage of growth, we too are invited into the process ourselves.



## ABOUT DEBS PEAKE

I have seen first-hand the struggles that teenage girls face during my 10 years as a teacher in secondary schools and volunteering as a youth mentor.

In 2013, I began to run self-esteem courses for girls and in 2021 I left teaching to set up Know Your Worth, a charity that aims to build self-esteem in teenage girls.

I want to see teenage girls grow in confidence, understand their value and make better decisions.

## ABOUT THE COURSE

Know Your Worth is an 8-week course to help teenage girls build self-esteem and make good decisions. I can deliver it for girls in your school, youth group or church.

The course covers emotions, relationships, social media, resilience and hopes, and is designed to help teenage girls place greater value on themselves, and expect others to do the same.

Find out more at [know-your-worth.org.uk](http://know-your-worth.org.uk) or email me at [debs@know-your-worth.org.uk](mailto:debs@know-your-worth.org.uk) for pricing.

