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Parenting practices effect on adolescent self-esteem

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Parenting practices effect on adolescent self-esteem

Abstract

According to Faust (1980), there is no greater or more basic sign of safety or affirmation of personal survival beyond self-esteem. This author maintained that feeling lovable and accepting yourself are the most important underlying components to human behavior. It is Faust's (1980) belief that self-esteem guides every thought and act of all human beings through each waking and sleeping moment of their lives. However, what self-esteem is composed of or how it can be defined is a continuing debate.

PARENTING PRACTICES EFFECT ON ADOLESCENT SELF-ESTEEM

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Kelly L. Luzum

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In the midst of winter,

I finally learned

That there was in me

An invincible summer. (Camus cited in Anderson, 1981, p. iii)

According to Faust (1980), there is no greater or more basic sign of safety or affirmation of personal survival beyond self-esteem. This author maintained that feeling lovable and accepting yourself are the most important underlying components to human behavior. It is Faust's (1980) belief that self-esteem guides every thought and act of all human beings through each waking and sleeping moment of their lives. However, what self-esteem is composed of or how it can be defined is a continuing debate.

Rosenberg (1965) described self-esteem as the evaluation which an individual makes and customarily maintains with regard to himself or herself. This evaluation, in Rosenberg's opinion, is expressed as an attitude of approval or disapproval of oneself. Coopersmith (1976) defined self-esteem as a personal judgment of self-worth that is also reflected through an individual's attitude. Borba and Borba (1978) described self-esteem as the combination of all the information one receives from the environment - how a person perceives him or herself to be understood by others and how he or she sees him or herself. Stefenhagen (1990) interpreted self-esteem as "one's assessment and evaluation of oneself at any particular time" (p. 14). Regardless of how

one defines self-esteem, it is imperative to recognize its significance in healthy development, especially in the development of adolescents (Oyefoso & Zacheaus, 1990).

Since adolescence has been referred to as a period of turmoil and as a "critical period of self-evaluation" (Shirk, 1987, p. 59), the issue of self-esteem and how it effects the adjustment of children and adolescents has been widely documented (LeCroy, 1988; Litovsky & Dusek, 1985; Nottelmann, 1987; Oyefeso & Zacheaus, 1990). Low self-esteem has been associated with feelings of inadequacy; perceiving oneself to be helpless and inferior (Rogers & Dymond, cited in Oyefoso & Zacheaus, 1990); feeling isolated, ashamed, or depressed; and devaluing one's capabilities and achievements (Coopersmith, 1976). Low self-esteem has also been associated with high anxiety, thus supporting the role of self-esteem in the general maladjustment of an individual (Bledsoe, cited in Oyefeso & Zacheaus, 1990). The concern about adolescent self-esteem is supported by Sturkie and Flanzer's research (cited in Blake & Slate, 1993) which shows a positive correlation between low self-esteem and youth suicide, depression, and loneliness. Similarly, Porteous (cited in Harper & Marshall, 1991) concluded that "adolescents who admit to experiencing more serious problems tend to have poor self-esteem" (p.801). Therefore, it is important to foster the self-esteem of a child beginning during childhood (Oyefeso & Zacheaus, 1990).

Harper & Marshall (1991) believed that adolescents are probably

more concerned with their self-image and how others perceive them than people are in other age groups. Vernon (1993) stated that it is during adolescence when friendships become very important, and because of this, it is developmentally appropriate for individuals at this age level to be concerned about the opinions of their peers. Self-confirmation during adolescence is shifted from parents to peers. Despite this shift from parents to peers, research shows that parenting practices have a significant impact on the development of adolescent self-esteem (Blake & Slate, 1993; LeCroy, 1988; Litovsky & Dusek, 1985).

Due to the significance of self-esteem during adolescence, it is crucial for those in the helping profession to be aware of parenting practices effect on adolescent self-esteem. This paper will focus on the specific role various parenting practices play in self-esteem development. Furthermore, the impact of parental actions on adolescent self-esteem will be examined.

Historical Review of Self-Esteem Research

From a historical perspective, self-esteem began with the writings of many well-known theorists in psychology. Adler (cited in Bednar, Wells, & Petersen, 1989, p. 26) noted that "self-esteem is dependent upon accepting imperfectness and still striving to complete the goals of a chosen style of life." Allport (cited in Bednar et al., 1989) viewed self-esteem as responding to threat with healthy psychological defenses. He felt the individual becomes psychologically healthy by coping with

difficulties instead of avoiding them. Other theorists such as Rogers and May (cited in Bednar et al., 1989) believed that persons with high self-esteem become themselves, not the people that others want them to be. Their self-esteem depends upon the courage to become and remain authentic (Bednar et al., 1989).

However, these early suppositions were followed by years when the concept of self-esteem was thought of as being "unscientific and soft-headed" (Wylie, 1974, p. 27). Wylie (1974) criticized early research attempts to measure self-esteem. It was Wylie's (1974) claim that "internal inconsistency characterizes all personality theories which emphasize constructs concerning the self" (p. 27). Wylie accused researchers of giving vague statements and using poor measurement and research design. As a result of the debate over a nominal definition for the concept of self-esteem, research was stifled for some time.

A contemporary review of self-esteem research has demonstrated that research methods are finally coming of age. This progress is a result of abandoning the attempts to study self-esteem as a global, unidimensional entity and recognizing that it is influenced both by self motives, as well as by the immediate social situation. Coopersmith and Rosenberg (cited in Litovsky & Dusek, 1985) renewed the utility of the concept through more refined measurements of the specific constructs included in self-esteem. This change is demonstrated further as theoretical perspectives on the development of self-esteem are explored.

Theoretical Perspectives on Self-Esteem Development

Developmental Self Theory

Theoretically there is considerable heterogeneity in the assumptions that personality theorists make about the essence of human nature. Most theorists seem to agree that early experiences have a major impact on general personality development and on self-esteem in particular.

Jensen, Huber, Cundic, and Carlson (1991) examined a theoretical model that provided an alternative conceptualization about the self. These researchers believed that the range of constructs used to describe and understand the self have been too restricted and a more adequate understanding of the self will occur only when a more complete range of self-dimensions are examined. Therefore, a broad range of terms referring to the self were integrated into what is called the developmental self-theory. This theory suggested an optimal sequence of personality development based on stages of self-development, similar to Maslow's hierarchy of needs.

Stages of self development. Jensen et al. (1991) described three tiers in the sequence of personality development. The first tier includes the constructs of self-awareness, self-esteem, and self-concept. From birth through the first year, an individual has no awareness of self because at this stage children have not learned to differentiate self from others. The next stage of the first tier is the development of self-esteem.

Self-esteem includes feelings or emotions about one's self which are initially acquired by the way one is treated before and during the second and third years of life. Touching and ample affection are influential in developing positive feelings about one's self. The last construct of tier one is self-concept. This develops from positive feedback, which is cognitive in nature, about one's body, performance, and other attributes received from significant others.

The second tier is composed of self-control, self-confidence, self-reflection, and self-identity. Gaining self-control begins during the preschool years and continues throughout life. The development of self-control is related to an internal locus of control. If an individual cannot regulate personal behaviors, his or her self-confidence will be negatively influenced. During the end of childhood and in early adolescence, self-reflection becomes highly developed as an individual progresses to the formal operation stage of cognitive thinking. During this period, the individual is able to think about or theorize about the self. The final stage of the second tier is self-identity, which is a composite view of one's behavior and aspects of personality.

The third tier is characterized by identification with others. This construct is related to the autonomous and individualistic stages of Loevinger's model of development. A high sense of morality and unselfishness are also associated with this final tier.

Loevinger's Model of Development

Another theoretical position, similar to developmental self-theory, was developed by Loevinger (1976). In her work, a parallel is made between the social-cognitive and intrapsychic development. Loevinger's hypothesis is that more mature individuals become increasingly independent of parental feedback for the regulation of self-esteem. Levels of psychological maturation were determined by the way an individual understands an experience, interpersonal relationships, and self.

Loevinger's stages of psychological maturation. The earliest stage of this model is known as the preconformist stage in which individuals are impulsive, demanding, and dependent. At this stage, an individual is most concerned with having his or her needs met. Individuals at this stage appear more dependent on parental feedback for self-image formation. The next level of psychological maturation is known as the conformist stage where self-awareness increases and the individual is able to create verbal expressions of emotion. Although not wholly autonomous in their ways of thinking, individuals at this level may be able to use their conformity to group standards as an alternative to the values of their parents. The final stage is that of the postconformist. This stage is characterized by individuals who cope with inner conflict with a high degree of self-perception and show acceptance of individual differences. These individuals perceive and integrate experiences in a

more autonomous, self-directed manner. At a lower stage an individual's self-esteem would be regulated by external events, whereas an individual at a higher stage would have a more stable, internally regulated sense of self.

The results of Loevinger's research coincide with her hypothesis that a more mature adolescent evaluates him or herself more independently of parents than does the adolescent at a lower stage of ego development. In agreement with these findings, another study conducted by Marton, Golombek, Stein, and Korenblum (1988) found similar results when correlating self-esteem in early adolescence to personality functions and adaptive skills. These authors noticed that the adolescent with good internalization can be expected to have an appropriately positive sense of self and the adolescent whose internalizations are disturbed are found to have low self-esteem. Therefore, self-esteem is related to maturity in stage of ego development.

Psychoanalytic Theory

In accordance with Coopersmith's studies (Rosen, 1991), psychoanalytic theory focused on the importance of parenting in the development of self-esteem. This theory states "the better the childhood rearing experiences, the richer the inner self-objects and the more self-reliant and confident the personality" (Rosen, 1991, p. 19). A major factor contributing to the development and regulation of self-esteem is the

individual's perception of his/her own worth in the eyes of parents or parental figures.

Constructivist Self-development Theory

The constructivist self-development theory is a blend of object relations, self-psychology, and social cognitive theoretical positions. McCann and Pearlman (1992) utilize this theory to explain that when trauma occurs in the critical developmental periods of early childhood and young adulthood, pervasive disturbances in development may arise. These disturbances occur in the six need areas: safety, trust/dependence, self-esteem, independence, power, and intimacy. When a child experiences trauma, his or her schema, or beliefs, assumptions, and expectations related to these needs are likely to be disrupted. This suggests that healthy early childhood development results in an individual with a solid self-esteem. Early trauma can impede this development.

In summary, the theoretical perspectives described generate the following assumptions: (a) there is an optimal sequence for development of self; (b) adolescent self-esteem depends on his or her stage in ego development; and (c) early experiences have an impact on self-esteem development. All theories stress the relationship between positive interactions with parents and the development of high self-esteem. For this reason, a variety of parenting practices will now be discussed.

Parenting Practices

Contributing Factors

In a 1967 study, Coopersmith (cited in Litovsky & Dusek, 1985) studied the relationship between child-rearing practices and self-esteem in early adolescent boys. In his research, Coopersmith found that parental acceptance and the setting of appropriate limits on behavior fostered self-esteem in these boys. Coopersmith suggested that four major factors contribute to the development of self-esteem.

1. The value that the child perceives others have toward the self; expressed in affection, praise, and concerned attention.

2. The child's experience with successes and the status or position one perceives oneself to hold in the environment.

3. The child's individual definition of success or failure. The aspirations and demands one places upon oneself determines what constitutes success.

4. The child's style of dealing with negative feedback or criticism.

Characteristics of Significant Others

Coopersmith's work focused on the role of parents and on the characteristics of those significant others who foster negative or positive self-esteem. Factors such as mothers' self-esteem, the parents' marital stability, affection for the child, and estimation of child's intelligence have been shown to be positively associated with children's self-esteem. In 1969, Coopersmith (cited in Litovsky & Dusek, 1985) evaluated the

parents of children with a high self-esteem and emphasized the importance of the following conditions in the home: (a) clearly communicating love and acceptance to their children, (b) communicating well-defined limits and high expectations for performance, and (c) respecting the children's individuality, allowing them to be different and unique within the established boundaries.

Recent research supporting Coopersmith's early findings was conducted by Blake and Slate (1993). The findings of their study strongly suggested that when adolescents do not perceive acceptance from their parents they are more likely to have low self-esteem. Litovsky and Dusek's (1985) study found similar results which demonstrated the importance of an accepting and warm atmosphere for the psychological growth of an adolescent.

Parent Self-Esteem

Coopersmith (cited in Litovsky & Dusek, 1985) also found that parents' self-esteem and experienced competence were significant factors in a child's self-esteem. Children's positive expectations of themselves are much more likely to be fulfilled if they have observed their parents model these attributes. Coopersmith's research indicated a high correlation between high self-esteem in parents and competence in their children. He pointed out the importance of parental modeling, both of their own self-esteem and of their approach to problems. In this way, parents affect the child both directly and indirectly. Children are directly

affected by a parent's expression of acceptance. They are also indirectly affected through a parent's demonstration of behaviors that build self-esteem. Such behaviors include personal displays of affection and word of encouragement and praise.

Parenting Style

Litovsky and Dusek (1985) examined the effect of child rearing on self-esteem development during the early adolescent years. Results indicated that adolescents who perceived their parents as warm and accepting had higher self-esteem than those who perceived their parents as colder and rejecting. Also, those students who saw their parents as psychologically controlling had a lower level of self-esteem than students who saw their parents as granting autonomy. These findings illustrated how a warm and accepting atmosphere can influence an adolescent's psychological growth.

Brockner (1988) agreed with these findings and stated "the more parents foster a psychological climate which heightens their children's perceptions of their competence and/or worthiness, that is by granting them a reasonable amount of autonomy, by being supportive, and by spending 'quality time' with them, the more likely the children are to develop high global self-esteem" (p. 121).

Maccoby and Martin's research (cited in Wicks-Nelson & Israel, 1991) described how patterns of parental behavior were related to child

characteristics. Their study indicated that the most beneficial parental behavior in developing child self-esteem is that of an authoritative parent.

An authoritative parent expects mature behavior, sets standards and enforces them, encourages children to express ideas, recognizes both parental and children's rights, and encourages independence and individuality. Maccoby and Martin believed that children who are raised with authoritative parents "tend to be independent, socially responsible, able to control aggression, self-confident and of high self-esteem" (cited in Wicks-Nelson & Israel, 1991, p. 28). Kurdek, Fine, and Sinclair (1994) noted that authoritative parenting involving high levels of involvement and supervision was positively related to an adolescent's adjustment to a parenting transition.

Conversely, children who have authoritarian parents tend to withdraw socially, lack internal locus of control, and have low self-esteem. Authoritarian parents set rules with little input from children and children are forbidden to challenge the rules. When rule deviation occurs the punishment is often severe and physical. Another identified parenting style is described as indulgent or permissive. A permissive parent does not demand mature behavior, tolerates children's impulses, and uses little punishment. Children with permissive parents tend to be impulsive, and they lack the ability to take responsibility for their behavior (Wicks-Nelson & Israel, 1991).

Verbal Interaction From Significant Others

Significant others play a vital role in self-esteem development (Blake & Slate, 1993). Coopersmith (cited in Blake and Slate, 1993) explained that the perceptions of acceptance, worth, respect, and love from significant others foster self-esteem. Blake and Slate (1993) researched the relationship between adolescent self-esteem and perceived parental verbal interaction. They found that when verbal interactions between an adolescent and significant others are abusive, adolescents do not perceive themselves as being accepted. The quality of parental verbal interaction as perceived by adolescents is significantly related to adolescents' self-esteem. Adolescents have higher self-esteem and more confidence when they perceive the verbal interactions between themselves and their parents as being positive.

As early as 1975, Coopersmith (cited in LeCroy, 1988) found that family relationships have an impact on self-esteem development. Recent research by LeCroy (1988) confirmed this conclusion and revealed that attachments to parents are significantly related to adolescent well-being and self-esteem. Obviously, attachments and relationships between parents and adolescents are dependent upon verbal and non-verbal interactions. The parental verbal interactions studied by Blake and Slate (1993) will now be examined in further detail.

Types of verbal interaction. In this research, four types of verbal interaction between parents and adolescents were studied: (a) belittling

and berating, (b) non-support, (c) non-communication, and (d) rejection and hostility. Hamachek (cited in Blake & Slate, 1993) noted that interactions involving belittling and berating resulted in adolescents feeling submissive. During an interaction of non-support, Felson and Zielinski (cited in Blake & Slate, 1993) found that adolescents feel uncomfortable in the presence of the parent. This often leads the child to believe that he or she is not accepted and approved as a person. Hall (cited in Blake & Slate, 1993) researched non-communication between parents and adolescents and found that this interaction results in the development of negative views of his or her own opinions. When adolescents experience rejection and hostility, Simons and Robertson (cited in Blake & Slate, 1993) predicted that the probability of developing deviant behavior and coping strategies will increase.

Overall, findings showed a significant relationship between the quality of parental verbal interaction as perceived by adolescents and adolescent self-esteem. Those adolescents who perceive their parents as interacting positively with them like themselves and are more confident. In opposition, parents who are perceived as interacting more negatively have adolescents who have problems with self-esteem and self-concept (Blake & Slate, 1993).

Parental Support Versus Control

Research by Barber, Chadwick, and Oerter (1992) found parental supportive behavior to be positively related to self-esteem. In addition,

various types of negative controlling behaviors were found to be negatively related to self-esteem. This research supports Coopersmith's (cited in Litovsky & Dusek, 1985) assertion that less controlling parents allow adolescents to experiment with self-defining behaviors and learn their own competencies.

This study compared socialization patterns of parents and their adolescent children from Germany and the U.S. Notable similarities were found between the two cultures. Both U.S. and German parents used similar levels of supportive behaviors, such as physical affection, sustained contact, and companionship. The cultures differed, however, in how they integrated personal feelings into discussions with their adolescents about behavior. In both cultures, "adolescent self-esteem was significantly associated with adolescent perceptions of a relationship with their parents that was characterized by feelings of security and availability" (Barber, Chadwick, & Oerter, 1992, p. 138). This finding is consistent with Sullivan's (cited in Barber et al., 1992) belief that positive relationships with significant others contribute to a child's self-esteem.

Parental Gender Differences

To break down the influence of the family even further, a study was conducted to measure which parent had more influence on ego development and self-esteem (Isberg, Hauser, Jacobsen, Powers, Noam, Weiss-Perry, & Follansbee, 1989). The result of the study showed that mothers, more often than fathers, influence the development of the ego.

However, the self-esteem of a female adolescent seems to be especially enhanced by a girl's positive experience with her father and the level of a boy's self-esteem was positively related to the mothering they experienced.

A study by Richards, Gitelson, Petersen, and Hurtig (1991) reaffirmed the research done by Isberg et al (1989). Richards et al. (1991) found that boys and girls who perceived their cross-sex parent to be warm and supportive were found to have higher self-esteem. A child's attachment to his or her parent is significantly related to adolescent well-being and self-esteem.

Empathy

Baker and Baker (1987) emphasized the importance of early experiences in the development or enhancement of self-esteem. The failure of parental empathy to meet early childhood needs results in the inability to develop intrapsychic structures that can reliably regulate self-esteem and calm the self. This leaves the person overly dependent on those in the immediate surroundings to provide these functions.

Intrinsically comprehending the experience of others from one's own unique perspective is known as empathy (Baker & Baker, 1987). Parental unresponsiveness and failure to empathize are thought of as underlying factors for almost all psychopathology. One behavior which demonstrates empathy is mirroring. Mirroring is when a parent's behavior reflects back to the child a sense of self-worth and value. This

behavior creates internal self-respect. Parental responses of indifference, hostility, or excessive criticism reflect back low worth and inhibit assertiveness. Mirroring responses of the parent are concerned with the maintenance and development of self-esteem (Baker & Baker, 1987).

Based on the research it is clear that if certain behaviors and interactions occur, the self-esteem of an adolescent is likely to be higher. Areas of significance include: (a) parental acceptance; (b) positive communication between parent and child; (c) an authoritative parenting style; (d) support, availability, and empathy; and (e) high parental self-esteem.

The School Counselor's Role with Parents

In summarizing the research reviewed for this paper, it is apparent that parents play a vital role in the development of adolescent self-esteem. One of the three core responsibilities for a school counselor is consultation. To address student self-esteem needs it is important to consult with parents. Consultation should be a role of school counselors because "a growing body of research indicates that consultation is an effective method of addressing a variety of school-related issues" (Vernon, 1993, p. 293). Consultation with parents is essential in promoting adolescent self-esteem. The process of consultation may involve a preventive focus through parent education or it may be remedial in the form of individual parent consultation.

Education/Training Approach

A consultation model which is frequently used when working with parents is the education/training approach (Dougherty, 1990). This approach is mainly used with groups where the emphasis is on sharing information and skills. The goal of this form of consultation in a school is to increase the effectiveness of parenting practices. Parent participation and willingness to change will be increased if attendance is voluntary.

To enhance the success of consultation, Conoley and Conoley (cited in Dougherty, 1990) suggested that the consultant, or counselor in this case, provide an appropriate atmosphere. The following guidelines are suggested for the creation of such a climate.

1. Use limited amount of self-disclosure at the beginning.
2. Be open to any concerns about the consultation process.
3. Treat the consultees, or parents, with respect.
4. Be accepting of feedback.
5. Learn names of the participants as early as possible.
6. Have a sense of humor and be flexible if things go wrong.

Parent education and training can take place individually or in a small group format. Vernon (1993) asserted that such programs offer knowledge and skills to parents on a variety of subjects such as alternative methods of discipline, communication, child development, behavior disorders, or ways to enhance self-esteem.

A typical parent education program would consist of approximately six to eight weekly sessions, each lasting 60 to 90 minutes. Topics for these sessions may include: (a) building respect for rules and authority, (b) addressing the most common mistakes that parents make with teens, (c) developing strategies to build an adolescent's confidence, (d) developing effective parent-adolescent communication skills, (e) understanding developmental issues of adolescents, (f) promoting the most appropriate style of parenting, and (g) building a partnership with your adolescent's school.

More specifically, a counselor could develop a parent group with a focus on how parents can improve their relationships with their adolescent children. LeCroy (1988) suggested that professionals working with families may want to consider how they can increase the level of attachment between parents and their adolescent children. His research supported the view that the degree of emotional involvement with parents is a predictor of adolescent problem behavior. Since attachments between parent and child become weaker as the child grows older, a program designed to improve parent-adolescent relationships may be useful as a preventative strategy. A program of this type may prove helpful "since attachment may mediate the effects of problem behavior and low self-esteem" (LeCroy, 1988, p. 145).

Some counselors may choose to create their own parent education groups. However, other counselors may feel more

comfortable to use a program or model which has already been developed. Rosemond (1993) offered a variety of material on parenting through books and videotapes. Also, counselors can find valid parenting information and ideas from agencies such as The Parent Institute (1995).

Individual Consultation

The role of a school counselor also involves individual consultation with parents. A typical example would be, parents who call or visit the school counselor for ideas about how to enhance their adolescent's self-esteem. In describing their adolescent daughter, the parents report that she displays self-defeating behaviors through verbal comments about herself. The parents say that she often makes statements such as "I'm a loser, nothing I ever do is good." In working with the parents, the school counselor could suggest alternative ways to provide positive feedback for their daughter, such as highlighting small accomplishments and expressing their acceptance of her as a person.

Other suggestions for these parents would be to practice authoritative parenting skills. As mentioned earlier, an authoritative parent sets standards and enforces them, encourages children to express ideas, and encourages independence and individuality (Maccoby & Martin cited in Wicks-Nelson & Israel, 1991). Parents may also need to examine their own self-esteem and the type of modeling they provide for their adolescent children. In addition to these suggestions, a school counselor should also have a list of books and

media materials which address adolescent self-esteem on hand to recommend to the parents.

Brief Family Consultation

It is also suggested that counselors use brief family consultation when working with parents (Vernon, 1993). Due to the time limits of school counseling, brief approaches are suitable and most effective with functional families. A family approach will help parents recognize the role they “play in maintaining and solving childhood behavior problems” (p. 284). This type of intervention also provides a counselor with the opportunity to reinforce the parents’ ability to help their children in future times of crisis.

During brief family consultation, the school counselor would meet with the adolescent, the parents, and the teachers in a school setting for a maximum of five conferences. The purpose of this intervention is to elicit a behavior change. The parents, teachers, counselor, and child agree to work together as a team toward a mutual goal.

For example, a mother may be frustrated with her son’s lack of commitment toward his education. During the initial phone call with the school counselor, the mother repeatedly stated that, “Jonathan is failing to complete his work this semester and I can’t help him anymore, there is nothing more I can do”. Because of this mother’s distorted boundaries, brief family consultation may be an effective intervention. Together, the “team” will identify target behaviors and meet weekly to review the

progress being made toward the goal. During these conferences, the team members will also identify the actions to be taken before the next meeting.

When doing brief family consultation with adolescents, Vernon (1993) suggested that counselors use a cognitive approach rather than a behavioral approach. Vernon believes that this type of technique will generate better results with teenagers due to their need for independence.

Conclusion

Although adolescence is a time when peers become more important than family, a study by Greenberg (cited in LeCroy, 1988) showed that parent relationships were a more powerful predictor of self-esteem than were peer relationships. Harper and Marshall's (1991) research concluded that "family remains the most important resource for young people as they make their transition toward adulthood" (p. 807).

Parents play a large role in maintaining and solving childhood behavior problems. School counselors cannot do an effective job of helping students without the support and cooperation from parents. Vernon (1993) stated that counselors are working under an illusion if they believe they can effectively help children without communicating and working with the significant adults in their lives. Research by Litovsky and Dusek (1985) noted that the optimal home atmosphere will help an adolescent feel wanted and accepted. This type of home

atmosphere “not only fosters feelings of self-worth and value but also promotes exploration of one’s competencies” (p. 386).

Educators and counselors work diligently to meet the individual needs of students, as well as promoting a warm and accepting climate in schools. Parents need to become aware of how significant their parenting practices are to the development of their children. By working together, schools and parents can promote adolescent self-esteem. Improved self-esteem will result in marked effects in all facets of an adolescent’s academic and personal life.

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