

1. Social Development

We are all social creatures. Understanding who we are as people - our positive traits and the areas that need work - enables us to change and grow. Good relationships and communication skills help us to develop and maintain healthy relationships. Understanding our culture and that of others in our family and community enables us to develop an appreciation of our past and value our future.

Personal Development

1. Picture Yourself

Have your youth cut out pictures, words and phrases from a magazine that describe how they see themselves or things that are important to them. Make a collage with all of the pictures and words. Talk about their choices and what they mean. Talk about what kind of self images communicated by the pictures/words they've chosen. **Levels: 1 2 3**

2. Watch The Self-Talk

If you hear your youth making negative comments about themselves ("I'm so stupid," "I can't do anything right"), call attention to it. Ask them what they mean, or challenge what they're saying. Help them remember things they can do well by talking about or looking at old photos. **Levels: 1 2 3 4**

3. Learning About Yourself

Play "The Un-game" with your child (can be purchased at most toy stores). This game asks players questions about themselves and there are no wrong answers. Be prepared to share things about yourself as you play. **Levels: 1 2 3**

4. Say It Carefully

Watch how you praise your child. Statements like "You got all your spelling words right -you're such a good girl!" can teach kids that we only value them for what they do well.

Instead, try to emphasize the importance of doing your best and feeling good about yourself with statements like "You worked really hard on those spelling words" or "It looks like you really enjoyed making this drawing." **Levels: 1 2 3 4**

Teachable Moment

Unfortunately, many youths in our society today do self-destructive things.

When your youth comes home with a story about how someone in their school tried to commit suicide or overdosed on drugs, talk about the incident.

Ask your youth what they think caused that person to act that way. Talk about the idea of self-esteem and how people with low self-esteem may

sometimes do self-destructive things because they don't think they are worth much as a person. Talk with your youth about their self-esteem, and ask how they would get help if feeling alone, sad, overwhelmed, etc.

5.

6. Write It Down

Sit down with your youth and help them make a list of their strengths and the things they do well. Have them write these things down on a notecard and keep it some place safe. When they are feeling down, they can pull out the card and be reminded of their good points and the things they do well. **Levels: 1 2 3 4**

7. I Have A Dream

Ask your youth what some of their dreams are. Ask them about short-term goals ("I want to sing in the church choir") as well as long-term goals ("I'd like to be a writer"). Talk about the strengths they have now that could help them meet their goals. Share some of your own dreams for the future. **Levels: 1 2 3 4**

Tip

Help your youth discover activities they enjoy doing and can have success in. For some youth it might be sports, others may like music, drawing, or pottery. Give them opportunities to participate in things they can be good at, both at home and in the community. This helps youth uncover and build on strengths and talents.

Cultural Awareness

1. A Vocal History

If your youth came from a different biological family, preserving their sense of heritage and where they came from may be difficult. To encourage them to remember where they came from, have them sit down with a tape recorder and reminisce about family holidays, meals, trips or other experiences. Bring the tape out from time to time (possibly on their birthday) for them to listen to. **Levels: 1 2 3 4**

2. Language Lessons

If you speak a language besides English, speak it at home and teach it to your youth if they show an interest. If your youth comes from another family and speaks a different language, ask them to teach you some words and phrases as a way of building ties with them and encouraging pride in their cultural heritage. **Levels: 1 2 3 4**

3. Food As Culture

If your youth comes from a culture different from your own, periodically let them enjoy

“traditional” meals from their culture at restaurants or in your home. With any youth, explore the foods of different cultures by eating out at restaurants that serve ethnic foods.

Levels: 1 2 3 4

4. Clothes As Culture

As you watch TV with your youth or go to events where there are many people, talk about the different kinds of clothes people may wear to represent their racial or ethnic background. If your child is of a different culture than yours, let them explore wearing clothes that are identified with their culture. **Levels: 1 2 3 4**

5. Toys As Culture

If you have saved toys from your childhood, bring them out to show your children. Talk about their meaning to you and how they may be specific to your culture. **Levels: 1 2**
Through friends, libraries, TV, museums, or the Internet, help your child learn about toys from other cultures. **Levels: 1 2**

6. Friends Around The World

Make friends with people from other cultures who live in your neighborhood or work with you. Invite them to your home or go to their home as a way to introduce your youth to people from other cultures. Let your youth celebrate a holiday or go to a place of worship with a friend or family member from another culture. **Levels: 1 2 3 4**

7. Faith As Culture

Places of worship can be another way to expose your youth to other cultures. Consider visiting a place of worship different than your own to see how other groups express their faith. Congregations of ethnically mixed people can provide a good demonstration of how different people can be united by something like faith. **Levels: 1 2 3 4**

8. Holidays As Culture

Observe "traditional" holidays of your own or your youth's culture (if different). Help your youth find information (in books, on the Internet) about how a certain holiday is celebrated if they don't know. Try to incorporate food, activities, and music from that holiday into your celebration. If your child is of a different background than yours and feels comfortable, let them "lead" some part of the celebration. **Levels: 1 2 3 4**

9. Exploring Other Cultures

Take day or weekend trips with your youth to areas that are different than where you live. You might visit a town that is ethnically different, rural instead of urban, poor instead of

wealthy, large instead of small, etc. Talk about the differences between the places you are

visiting and your "home town." **Levels: 1 2 3 4**

10. Economic Culture

Keep in mind that culture can include economic factors as well. Spend a day volunteering at a soup kitchen or working in a housing project with your youth to expose them to the challenges faced by those living in poverty. **Levels: 1 2 3 4**

Tip

As parents, we must admit to ourselves when we are using stereotypes and then work on it. We can start by avoiding labels like "foster, black, short, fat, gay," etc. when referring to people.

11. Confronting Racism

Magazine articles, news stories, movies, or TV shows that deal with issues of racism can provide good opportunities to talk about these issues with your youth. After reading or watching them, help youth think about all the ways that racial prejudice can be expressed. **Levels: 1 2 3 4**

12. Stereotypes And Labels

If your youth uses a racial slur or stereotype, challenge their thinking by asking what they mean by this term. Re-educate them about how labels and stereotypes can hurt people. Talk about how we limit our ability to know other people if we judge others only by appearance (color, size, height, etc.). Ask your youth how they would feel if someone judged them only on the basis of their appearance. **Levels: 1 2 3 4**

Parent Quote

"As parents, we don't always know how to give kids the right tool to recognize and deal with discrimination. We may need to get some training to learn these tools."

13. Dealing With Discrimination

If you or your youth experience any type of discrimination, talk as a family about the situation. Talk about the feelings that come up when someone discriminates against you and use it as an opportunity to teach the importance of not acting that way towards them. Teach your youth how to handle discrimination when they encounter it. **Levels: 1 2 3 4**

Teachable Moment

If your youth does something that shows a racial prejudice, deal with it in a way that shows it is a serious matter. For example, if your youth calls another youth a racial slur, try to get together with your youth, the other youth and their parents to discuss the incident. Help your youth see that it is unacceptable and hurts other people.

14. Embracing Our Cultural Heritage

Youth who are multiethnic or multiracial need to begin learning about their mixed heritage as early as possible. Explore this through conversation, books, frequent contact with people who share their heritage, and discussion about racism they may encounter and tools to deal with it. For youth who resist looking at this important piece of their identity because they don't want to appear "different", role-model by researching, learning about, and celebrating your own heritage, whatever it may be. **Levels: 1 2 3 4**