

You Are Worthy, You Are Lovely, You Are Enough and You Have What It Takes!

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Several thoughts that kept going through my mind as I listened to and read the testimonies surrounding the Supreme Court hearings: "Where were the parents in the midst of all these parties?" "How sad that this is the reality for so many teenagers and young adults!"

Neuroscientists tell us that the rational part of the brain isn't fully developed until 25 years old. Wise parents begin from a young age to offer choices and share control to give opportunities to practice making decisions and living with the consequences. We support our children in gaining a healthy self-concept when we guide them in developing self-efficacy -- the belief that my own actions lead to the desired outcomes. To develop their own sense of self-efficacy, they need to do the thinking, planning, hoping, trial-and-error, dreaming and experiencing themselves.

Another key is our response when our child (no matter what age) messes up and makes mistakes. Keeping the connect with our child is the most important thing--loving them mistakes and all. If we respond calmly to problems and mistakes, we keep that connection and allow our child to learn from the natural consequence of fixing the problem. If we respond with anger, the anger becomes the focus instead of the mistake that was made.

Substance abuse doesn't happen in a vacuum. It is directly related to the parent-child bond of love and good communication. Children, youth and adults use drugs and alcohol to get relief from emptiness and fear. The best insurance against drug and alcohol abuse is a loving and open relationship between parent and child. Our words, our non-verbal cues and our actions need to communicate to our children: You are worthy, you are lovely, you are enough and you have what it takes!