



The importance of individuality and uniqueness

If your child doesn't fit the ideal of what's considered 'cool', they may feel left out – or think it's easier to follow their peers. Encouraging a young person to celebrate their individuality can boost self-esteem, confidence, and ultimately, happiness.

“Unfortunately, society encourages us all to look and act a certain way, and anything that even vaguely goes against those societal norms, is often challenged or ridiculed. This can make it hard to stay true to you – but if you're not, your happiness will suffer.”

Sarah Newton

Celebrating diversity

Everyone has a unique set of qualities, talents and gifts. What are your child's? Maybe they have a freckly nose, quick wit and can speak several languages. They might be tall, with caramel skin and a passion for photography. Or perhaps they're creative, with dimples and an ambition to win Olympic gold for curling.

Teen-specialising life coach Sarah Newton says, “Unfortunately, society encourages us all to look and act a certain way, and anything that even vaguely goes against those societal norms, is often challenged or ridiculed. This can make it hard to stay true to you - but if you're not, your happiness will suffer.”

To help your child love their individuality and celebrate their uniqueness, ask them about their dreams and help them pursue their ambitions (our article 'Help your daughter set personal' may help). Explain how to set self-development goals and work towards them, and emphasise the importance of education too.

Nobody should hide their true self

Embracing our individuality is essential for personal happiness. Trying to hide or change who we are to fit someone else's ideals lessens our sense of self-worth, causing self-esteem to plummet and insecurities to soar.

If your child is struggling to do their own thing, or is changing themselves to try and fit in with their peers, offer reassurance that it's perfectly OK to have interests that others may consider strange or unusual. In fact, it makes people more interesting.



It's OK to be different

Compared with their peers, your child may have a different haircut, wear different clothes or listen to different styles of music, and all of these differences should be valued. Help them see how boring the world would be if everyone looked and acted the same. Point out that the most fascinating people are the ones who dare to do their own thing.

By teaching your child the value of their unique identity, you'll be teaching them not only to love themselves, but also to truly accept others.

Next Steps

- **Be true to themselves.** When they stop trying to fit in with the 'popular' crowd and instead start pleasing themselves, they will develop a strong sense of self-worth
- **Celebrate uniqueness with friends.** Ask what makes each of their friends unique, then brainstorm ways that they can all celebrate their individual traits
- **Be proud of who they are, right now.** If they want to make lots of friends, suggest they join a club or share their talents with like-minded people. Wearing the 'right' clothes or changing their personality won't help them make true friends
- **Find their own sense of style.** Most teenagers love experimenting with fashion, but may feel pressured to imitate others. Support your son or daughter as they play with their appearance and find their own individual style