**Wallflower to Empowered: 8 Ways to Encourage Your Shy Teen**

If someone offered you a hundred bucks to bust a silly move on the dance floor in front of everyone, chances are you’d do it. Easy money, right? Not for your painfully shy and quiet teenager.

Being shy in itself is not a bad thing. In fact, people who are shy and introverted tend to have incredible empathy and listening skills. On the other hand, being a shy teen can come at a steep cost. You obviously don’t want your teen to be perceived as rude or to suffer from a lack of confidence. To help your teen feel more confident and empowered, here are eight ways to encourage them.



1. **Find Volunteering Opportunities**

Volunteering can be a great way for your teen to make new friends, practice their social skills, and learn new things that build their confidence, all while giving back to their local community. There are also plenty of [volunteer opportunities for teens](https://tallo.com/blog/volunteer-opportunities-teens/) that are perfect for shy people, so you can help ease your teen into it. For instance, your teen could walk dogs for the local humane society before working their way up to phone banking for them.

Plus, volunteering can be a huge benefit to their career. If your teen is on the hunt for [internships for high school students](https://tallo.com/blog/internships-for-high-school-students/), their volunteer experience is going to look pretty amazing on their application!

1. **Urge Them to Pursue Their Passions**

Everyone has things they’re passionate about — they just need to be coaxed out. Why not help your teen find things that get him or her excited? Start by having them make a list of hobbies and interests. Then, have them rate each item on a scale of 1-10.

Identify the top-rated items on the list and help your teen pursue what they love doing. For instance, does your teen love music? Stoke their inner fire by encouraging them to take music lessons or join the local music club at school. When your teen starts following their passions, their confidence will naturally begin to grow.

1. **Don’t Force It**

Some parents try to force their kids into uncomfortable social situations to improve their shyness, only for it to backfire spectacularly. The last thing you want to do is cause your teen to take two steps backwards!

Rather than throw your shy teen into the deep end, start small with people your teen knows. Plan a small get-together with a few family members or close friends so that your teen has an opportunity to practice small talk and grow their confidence before meeting new people. Just make sure that your teen always has an “out” in social settings. This way, they can easily escape if they become too anxious.

1. **Teach Assertiveness Skills**

Being assertive is an essential communication skill that shy teens often lack. Teens who have a [passive communication style](https://www.verywellmind.com/what-is-passive-communication-3024630) may not ask for help when they need it and avoid sharing their opinions out of fear of upsetting others. Assertive teens, on the other hand, know how to establish healthy boundaries for themselves and communicate effectively.

To help your teen become less passive and more assertive, have them practice using “I” statements. Encourage them to give their opinions on things. Finding a mentor who is a good role model for assertiveness could also greatly benefit your passive teen.



1. **Promote a Healthy Body Image**

Teens often go through a temporary period of shyness, and it’s no coincidence that it tends to happen around the same time as puberty. Bodily changes can make teenagers suddenly feel extremely self-conscious, causing them to withdraw from social situations. That, along with social media filters skewing everyone’s perception of beauty, and you have a recipe for a painfully shy teenager.

One of the best ways to help your teen build a healthy body image is to lead by example. Try not to criticize your body or voice your displeasure over how you look. Instead, be thankful for your body and practice positive self-talk.

It’s also important to teach your teen about media. Make sure that your teenager understands that what they’re seeing on social media is often the result of filters, airbrushing, cosmetic surgery, and other unrealistic beauty standards.

1. **Help Your Teen to Find a Job**

The benefits of teen employment go far beyond earning money. Having a job in high school can provide your teen with valuable skills — like time management and goal setting — that boost their confidence and improve their career outlook. And since many jobs for teens are in the customer service sector, your teen will have plenty of opportunities to practice their social skills.

However, just be on the watch for signs of burnout. Shy teens may be reluctant to admit that they’re having a hard time, so it’s up to you to watch them carefully and help lighten your teen’s load if it’s too much.

1. **Avoid Admonishments**

Society tends to reward people with outgoing personalities. And naturally, you don’t want your teen to be at a disadvantage due to their shyness.

However, be careful not to scold your teen for being shy when you become frustrated with them. Admonishments such as “Don’t be so shy!” or “Why can’t you be more outgoing?” are not helpful and simply reinforce the idea that there’s something inherently wrong with them. There’s not! Shy people have lots of redeeming qualities. You can still empower your teen without asking them to change who they are.

1. **Try New Things as a Family**

With some shy teenagers, a gentle nudge out the door is all they need to try something on their own. For others, they need a little more coaxing. To help expose your teenager to new things, consider doing activities as an entire family.

It doesn’t need to be anything too crazy or adrenaline-pumping. It can be as simple as hiking a new trail, playing an interesting game, or going climbing at your local rock climbing gym. By having the entire family participate, your teen may be more likely to put themselves out there.



**When to Seek Professional Help**

Shyness in teens usually isn’t a cause for concern. However, if your teen’s shyness is causing problems in school and in their social life, it may be time to seek out a mental health professional. A good therapist can help bolster your teen’s confidence and give them the tools they need to overcome their shyness.