Top Ten Tips for Teaching Modesty to Teens

1. Teach them what you mean by modest.
2. Tell them “No” and tell them “Why.”
3. Show them”Yes” and look for teachable moments.
4. Embrace fashion as an interest not an enemy.
5. You teach people how to treat you.
6. Whatever bait you use determines the type of fish you attract.
7. The parent is in charge.
8. Build self confidence and avoid embarrassment.
9. Monitoring your teen’s modesty is hard but necessary work.
10. Value Character over appearance.

Modest Impossible
Imagine I dropped you and your daughter off at the Mall with $500 to buy your teen a new wardrobe. The only catch is that everything has to be fashionable and pass a modesty test. Mission Impossible.

One sample of what you’re up against as parents
One very popular store markets thong underwear emblazoned with sexy slogans like “eye candy” and “wink, wink” to girls aged 7-14. Asked to defend their product, the company spokesperson said, “It’s cute and sweet and fun.”

The Guards
The "guards" were heavily armed and ready to protect the bank from any "bad guys" that might wander in. Matthew (four years old at the time) stood on one side of the entrance to the bank lobby with a toy bow and arrow in ready position. On the other side of the door stood his friend Cameron, also four, with an impressive plastic sword drawn from its sheath. As I stood in line at the teller window, I noticed that all the bank patrons, relieved that they were in such capable hands, were looking on appreciatively at these self-appointed guards.

Then she walked in, a long-legged young woman in high heels, a formfitting miniskirt, and spaghetti-strap top. The young guards glanced at each other with eyes wide. The rest of the onlookers turned their heads back and forth between the little boys and the young woman as if watching a tennis match, eyeballing the woman, then the boys, then the woman again. As this scantily-clad bombshell strutted across the bank lobby, made an ATM transaction, and then strutted back out through the armed doors, I sensed that everyone in the lobby was holding their breath and wondering, What could those boys be thinking right now?

As soon as the door closed and the woman was out of earshot, Cameron satisfied everyone's curiosity as he leaned over to Matthew and loudly exclaimed, "The Bible warns about women like that!"

Of course, the entire bank erupted in laughter! The incident happened years ago, but it's no laughing matter that today we often see young women dressed more like stereotypical hookers than modest young women.

Notes taken from articles written by Cathy Reynolds and Shannon Ethridge
1. **Teach them what you mean by modest.**
What is modesty? Modesty means different things to different people and, like other words, its meaning has undergone a metamorphosis over time. The dictionary tells us that to be modest is to avoid impropriety or indecency, to be reserved in sexual matters, and to be unpretentious in appearance.

So how do we know what constitutes modest apparel and what doesn't? Ultimately, it is up to you as parents to set the family standard. Discuss it with your spouse and come up with some guidelines that you can pass on to your daughters. Determine what you consider to be acceptable clothing choices. Talk about a specific age when it comes to wearing make-up, heels, etc.

2. **Tell them “No” and tell them “Why.”**
Be prepared to explain your decision-making process and be prepared for them to push the boundaries.

It’s easy to say, “I’m the parent and you will do what I tell you,” but while that approach may bring about outward conformity to the standard, it will not help your daughters to begin to value modesty in their own hearts. Instead, you want to help them to understand why modesty is such an important character issue and teach them to make good decisions on their own.

3. **Show them “Yes” and look for teachable moments.**
The best way to teach modest is by approving what is right more than pointing out what is wrong. Set a standard in you home by your own dress. Let your teen see you dressing modestly and making wise choices yourself.

4. **Embrace fashion as an interest not an enemy.**
Fashion is not the enemy. Fashion can be used as a tool for building self confidence if used in the right way. Your teen wants to look nice and that is not a bad thing. Just make sure they are looking “nice” in the right ways.

Use shopping trips as teachable moments. Help your daughter look her best while maintaining the standards you set as a family. A mother daughter shopping trip can be a powerful thing. A daddy daughter shopping trip can be just as powerful.

5. **You teach people how to treat you. Whatever bait you use determines the type of fish you attract.**
Show you teen that they get to determine how people approach them. Modesty plays a huge role in how people treat us.

6. **Recognize dad’s critical role.**
Never underestimate the influence of a Dad. My husband went on many shopping trips, even though this is not his favorite activity, in order to show his interest and have some input into the selection process. Dad’s approval is extremely significant in a daughter’s life, so fathers need to be careful in how they relate to them. Both words and tone

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matter greatly. Even though she may act like she resents your intrusion in her life at
times, your daughter really does care about what you think of her. Dads, let your
daughter know that you think she is beautiful – that she is unique in your eyes and
God’s. Your girls carefully watch your reaction – your opinion counts!

7. The parent is in charge.
You say more to your teen by what you allow than what you don’t allow. Be prepared to
draw the line and be prepared for backlash. How you handle line crossing will determine
how your daughter sees modesty. Remember every battle isn’t worth fighting. Not all the
fights you win are truly won.

8. Build self confidence and avoid embarrassment.
Your ultimate goal is to teach your daughter how to dress herself. Help her realize how
vauluable she is and she will dress up instead of dress down. Self Confidence comes
through spending time with your daughter. Praise her character over her beauty.

Avoid statements that will make your daughter try to compensate. “Your acne is getting
pretty bad.” “I hate when you put your hair up, your ears look so big.” “Don’t wear such
tight clothes your belly sticks out.”

Emarrassing your teen into modesty is a fast way to destroy their self confidence. A
woman with low self confidence will fall for any man.

9. Monitoring your teen’s modesty is hard but necessary work.
We make sure our kids get to school each day. We make sure they clean the house and
take responsibility for chores. It’s not easy but we know it will pay off in the end.
Sometimes we want to give up the fight on modesty. We want them to choose and be
responsible. Modesty is worth the fight just as school attendance and chores. It is not an
easy road to travel but one we must go down.

10. Value Character over appearance.
I have a friend who was in a bad car wreck and she now has a scar across her face. If
her entire self confidence was contained in her beauty her life would be a wreck.

Help your daughter see value in “being” your daughter not in how she looks. If your
daughter knows she is loved and will always be loved, she will very rarely try to find love
in the wrong places.

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