



# Girl Connection

FOR THOSE WHO SERVE ADOLESCENT FEMALES  
IOWA GENDER-SPECIFIC SERVICES TASK FORCE  
OCTOBER 2004

## Caregiver's List

This issue of the Girl Connection is devoted to suggestions for anyone who is in a position of acting as a caregiver for young women. Whether you are a service provider, social worker, juvenile court officer, parent, teacher or someone else who cares about young women, these are some ways that you can work toward empowering them and creating an environment as well as a relationship that helps them flourish.

### General

- Be a positive role model by showing respect for and confidence in girls and women.
- Embrace her identity, perspective & priorities.
- Praise her for accomplishments not appearance.
- Encourage honesty and authenticity rather than niceness and popularity.
- Be "askable" and reward questions. Provide a context where she can voice her concerns.
- Teach her to listen and express anger in constructive ways by modeling these behaviors.
- Teach her to take risks and overcome fears.
- Encourage her to do something she loves.
- Congratulate her on maturity, insight, and good judgment.
- Help her internalize her successes, take credit for her achievements, and not downplay her role in meeting her own challenges.
- Focus on nurturing a relationship with her rather than creating a long list of rules. Remember that in the absence of meaningful relationships, rules inspire rebellion in adolescents.

### Academics

- Encourage her in school by discussing studies with her, exploring areas of interest, and supporting her achievements.
- Engage her in projects that develop spatial reasoning and analytical skills. She may enjoy a chemistry set or building a model robot.
- Ask about math and science projects. Express interest in her progress in these subjects. Foster her interest in school science fairs and advanced math and science courses.
- Encourage her to take advanced computer science and technology classes. They can move

her skills beyond keyboarding into computer programming and problem solving.

- Encourage verbal skills. They are indispensable to her capacity to achieve across subject areas, to think critically, and to make her voice heard.
- Praise her intellect.

### Athletics

- Advocate equal programs, facilities, equipment, and publicity for girls and boys in athletic programs.
- Support the involvement in athletics of girls who may not see themselves as athletes.
- Encourage her to participate in outdoor activities and organized sports.
- Participate with her in outdoor adventure experiences organized by a women's outdoor adventure group.

### Career Exploration

- Encourage her to explore her strengths and talents in all fields, especially the nontraditional.
- Participate in the annual *Take Our Daughters to Work Day* each April.
- Organize a job shadowing experience in a field in which she has expressed interest.
- Help her compare the earning potential of careers with the expenses of the lifestyle she wants.

### Connection to Community Life

- Support her involvement in community groups and extracurricular activities.
- Provide opportunities for her to be a leader.
- Encourage her to volunteer.
- Support her actions for constructive social change.
- Take her with you to vote. Model active participation in the democratic process.
- Take her to activities such as "Women Take Back the Night" or Women's History Month celebrations.

### **Gender Roles**

- If she still enjoys bedtime stories, tell her one in which she is the heroine.
- Encourage her to develop her talents without narrowing her choices to traditional female roles.
- Provide toys, books, and games that show both males and females in nontraditional roles.
- Require both traditional and nontraditional chores of both boys and girls.
- Examine your own gender-based assumptions.

### **Media**

- Help her make wise choices about media consumption - like magazines, movies, & music.
- Subscribe her to a magazine created by/for girls.
- Find teachable moments(i.e. use a TV show you feel sends poor messages and say, "I think that program sends the wrong message," and why. Ask what messages she thinks programs communicate.

### **Money Management**

- Help her learn the value of material goods. For example, have her figure how much to save to purchase her favorite cd, athletic shoes, or a stereo.
- Teach her to balance a checkbook, calculate interest and go over a bank statement.

### **Decision Making**

- Ask her, "What do you think?" to teach her to be discriminating.
- Ask her, "Where do you draw the line?" to help her set boundaries.
- Ask her, "What do you want?" to help her make decisions.
- Ask her, "How will you get it?" to help her prioritize.
- Ask her, "How realistic is it?" to help her separate fantasy from reality.
- Ask her, "How would you handle that?" to develop trust in herself.

## **The Girl Connection**

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For back issues of *The Girl Connection*, more information about the Gender-Specific Services Task Force, or if you are willing to receive future issues via e-mail to save mailing costs, please contact us:

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