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| Psychologist offers 6 character-building techniques |
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| Parents today contend not only with yesterday's worries — drug abuse, bullying, teenage sex and delinquency — but many new challenges. |
| The digital age has introduced adult predators and other online hazards, and body-altering decorating such as tattoos and piercing's are popular temptations, says James G. Wellborn, a clinical psychologist with 18 years of experience working with parents and teens. |
| "The teenage years are unlike any other in a person's life — it's a unique in-between period from childhood to adulthood, and it's helpful to remember that problems during this time are actually normal. But teens still require guidance, encouragement and good ideas to see them through to adulthood," says Wellborn, author of the book "Raising Teens in the 21st Century: A Practical Guide to Effective Parenting." |

A universally admired trait, spanning all cultures, religion and philosophy, is compassion. A truly compassionate teen will inevitably have a host of other positive qualities, Wellborn says, including patience, understanding, sensitivity, tolerance, intuition and more. He says parents can encourage compassion in the following ways:

• Guilt it: A personal value system serves as a means of accountability to oneself (and your family and community). This begins with the value system parents promote in their kids. If they fulfill the promise of personal values it is a source of justifiable pride. Violating personal values should result in guilt for not doing what's right and shame for letting other people down. Parents need to help their kids along with this.

• Repeat it: Once is not enough when it comes to character. Find every opportunity to work it into the conversation. Using all of the strategies mentioned above, you will be able to work character issues into every possible situation in a remarkably diverse number of ways. You need to have mentioned character so often — at least once every couple of days — and in so many different forms that they are sick of hearing about it by the time they graduate from high school.