



## **OT's 10 Expert Tips for Moms of T(w)eenage Boys\***

**TEACH GOOD GROOMING AND YOU ARE GROOMING YOUR SON FOR LIFE**

**By Kathy Peel, "America's Family Manager," for OT – the Shower Equipment for Guys**

Adolescence is a new adventure — for boys and mothers alike. At no other point in life is a person changing so drastically. Child and parent must get used to new height, weight, appetite, and appearance. And with the t(w)een body producing more oil and odor than ever before, it's a time for building some basic hygiene habits — for two very good reasons.

First, the t(w)een learns to make himself presentable, which adds to his confidence, reduces his stress, and makes him more interested in interacting with the world around him. Second, as a mother contributes to new hygiene routines, she promotes healthy, appropriate grooming habits that her son needs as he transforms from boy to man. Both adolescents and moms have some adjustments to make. The t(w)eenagers need to learn, without defensiveness, that more effort at hygiene is necessary. Moms need to learn how to encourage without nagging.

It's a tricky time. Many mothers lack confidence when talking with sons about grooming and hygiene, sensing their t(w)eens' embarrassment or projecting their own. Sons may have questions they're too shy to ask or secretly feel hurt when mom keeps suggesting, "Take a shower."

The key is respect and sensitivity toward a t(w)een's privacy and independence. Here are ten simple ways mothers can help t(w)een boys develop good hygiene habits and a positive self image. Remember, the goal is to teach your son good grooming because in doing so, you are grooming him for life.

1. Leave helpful information to read about good grooming and hygiene on your son's dresser.
2. Purchase grooming products that appeal to guys this age and leave them in the bathroom for him to try, such as OT, the first line of personal care products exclusively for tween and teen boys.
3. Keep on hand plenty of clean underwear and the kind of socks he likes.
4. Be alert for opportunities to have casual conversations about how, when and why various products are used. (Few boys know the difference between a deodorant and antiperspirant without being told.) A trip to the store to purchase products for him provides a setting for informal education and mother-son bonding, as well.
5. Make sure he has clean shirts in keeping with whatever style he's into (but don't be shy about including an item that you think he'll look good in, too).
6. Be aware of your son's need to feel good about himself by adjusting your schedule to allow him enough time in the bathroom each morning.
7. Carve out time and space at home to give your son a sense of privacy. Be sensitive to his need to spend some time alone listening to music, trying on clothes and chilling out after school.
8. Be sensitive to his preoccupation with appearance and self image. Avoid teasing him or joking at his expense. Words are powerful and can hurt as much as they can help.
9. Be specific about what is and isn't acceptable behavior. Co-sign a dated contract at the start of each school semester that clearly spells out agreed upon behaviors and family rules. Negotiate the rules at a family meeting beforehand. Post the contract.
10. Help your son achieve a healthy balance in his life. Besides school and extracurricular activities, make sure he gets plenty of rest, has good eating habits, gets daily exercise, keeps himself well-groomed, receives spiritual guidance, and has time for fun and laughter

\* "OT's Ten Expert Tips" were developed with the cooperation of M.C. Culbertson, III, M.D., FAAP, FACEP Professor, Department of Pediatrics, University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center, Dallas and D'Arcy Lyness, Ph.D., Psychologist for KidsHealth.org, Nemours Foundation Wilmington, Delaware.