



Ten Ways to Create Hardiness Zones in Your Own Community

- 1) **Listen to Girls** -- Girls are the best people to tell you what girls need. Listening means not assuming you know all the answers or that your way is the right way. Pay close attention to what girls are saying and ask them to elaborate on their thoughts and feelings.
- 2) **Remind Yourself There is No Typical Girl** -- In spite of what the media shows us every day, girls and women come in all shapes and sizes, from diverse family backgrounds and social situations, and have different needs and interests. Value these differences and encourage girls to draw on their experiences to teach one another.
- 3) **Teach Girls (and Boys) to Be Critical Consumers of Media** -- Teach girls to question the narrow images (girls as sexy, diva, boy-crazy shoppers) they see on TV, in the movies, on-line, in toy stores, the mall, and in magazines. Offer them examples of real people who are not constrained by stereotypes.
- 4) **Stop Worrying About Your Looks** -- Girls learn about womanhood by watching and listening to the women in their lives. When you make negative comments about your body, you're teaching girls that women judge themselves and other women on their looks. Girls will learn to love their bodies if they see women doing the same.
- 5) **Do Your Own Work** -- Before "helping" girls, women first need to work on our own stuff. We can't help girls practice healthy conflict resolution, teach them to stand up to bullies, or expect them to create healthy relationships, if we can't do these things ourselves.
- 6) **Use Teachable Moments** -- If your daughter comes home upset about an injustice she experienced or witnessed in school, use that situation to brainstorm ways she can help fix things. Again, listen first. Don't over-react or jump in to fix the problem for her. Think and plan together.
- 7) **Assume Solidarity Between Girls** -- Today the media is rife with catty, backstabbing girls. As a result, it's getting harder for girls to trust one another. Affirm girls' relational strengths and their potential for coalition and collective action. Provide stories about and create opportunities to see and experience such girl power in action.
- 8) **Engage Girls' Anger and Help Channel It Productively** -- Contrary to messages girls are getting from everywhere, anger should not be silenced. Help girls identify anger, know how it feels and how to stay clear and centered in their disagreements. Offer constructive ways to express strong feelings – i.e. speaking up directly and respectfully, writing letters, or organizing a rally.
- 9) **Encourage Girls to Create Social Change** -- One of the most powerful things you can help girls realize is their own ability to create change. Support girls in their efforts to make change in their schools and communities. Teach them to draw up a petition, show them how to write a letter to an editor, help them plan a speak out. Show girls that their opinions matter.
- 10) **Offer Girls Safe Spaces to Practice and Grow** – We all make mistakes. Girls are likely to learn from their mistakes if they have a safe, non-judgmental place to practice, to try on new roles, and try out new voices.