

RAISING KIDS IN A WORLD OF COMPARISON

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Growing up in the 90s and early 2000s, magazines were all the rage. I remember poring through *Teen Beat*, *Seventeen*, and *Teen Vogue*. I loved reading up on my favorite celebrities and new fashion and beauty trends. But without realizing it, those glossy pages started my lifelong battle with comparison. I wasn't a kid actress like the Olsen twins, and I didn't write a fantasy book as a teenager like Christopher Paolini. I had wild, curly hair when straight hair was the style. I felt different from the people who were being idolized.



Social media has amplified the problem of comparison to a high degree. Growing up, I was limited to TV, movies, and magazines, but now kids have access to constant media streams—always in our hands and in our faces—that make it difficult to stop comparing ourselves to others. But as parents, we can also help our kids to remember that their own value and self-worth are rooted in God creating them and their individuality.

Here are some tips to help kids growing up in the social media generation remember their own value, just as they are:

Practice our own gifts (and praise others for theirs): Point out what makes your children special. Praise them for their skills, whether that's reading, volunteering, or being a good friend! Remind them of the ways they can use their unique gifts to help others. Help them see others' gifts as well—perhaps they have a friend who likes to bake, and your child likes to help you cook. Together, those skills make a whole meal!

Try new hobbies: If your child feels unsure about their talents, encourage them to try new things. Maybe you could plant a garden together over the summer or enroll them in a course on coding. We never know if we'll enjoy something until we try it!

Use gifts to help others: If your child likes to draw, encourage them to make cards for the sick or elderly at church or in your neighborhood. If your child loves animals, volunteer with them at a local shelter. Help your children to use and share their gifts with others, and recognize how vital their special skills are for the community.

Share a daily win: During dinner or car rides, ask everyone to share a "win," a way they used a special gift that day. These small stories remind kids that their talents matter.

Read Scripture about your uniqueness: God made each of us in his image, but he also made each of us to be unique. Read Scripture together about our individuality and how we shouldn't compare ourselves to others: [2 Corinthians 10:12-13](#); [Romans 12:3-5](#); [James 3:13-17](#); [1 Corinthians 12:27-31](#). Perhaps as a family, you can choose one verse to memorize and place it on sticky notes around your house or in the car.

As parents, we get to help our children remember that their uniqueness is something to celebrate and that their special gifts from God are beneficial in so many different ways!

written by Rachel Syens