



## 10 TO 12 YEARS

# Clothes That Fit (In)

"I can't wear those tighty whities anymore—you have to buy me some boxer shorts!" Austin Nichols, 11, of Plano, TX, announced to his very surprised mom, Christine. Turns out, Austin had been teased when some classmates spotted the telltale white band peeking from the top of his jeans. Most kids want to fit in, especially at this age, says Jaana Juvonen, Ph.D., a professor of developmental psychology at UCLA. However, lots of individual differences exist. For some boys and girls, clothes are a huge issue; for others, not so much. And while you might not be thrilled to see your child succumbing to peer pressure so soon, here are some ways to put it in perspective:

### He's picking up social skills.

Understanding what's desirable within one's peer network is an important social insight. Think about it this way: Wouldn't you rather your child understand what's "cool" vs. having no clue?

### He's learning planning skills.

If your child covets pricey designer duds, there exists a real opportunity to teach him about money management and budgeting. Negotiate some extra chores to earn, say, a pair of expensive sneakers and you'll be building his work ethic.

**It opens a dialogue.** As with all things parenthood related, you have

to pick your battles. That could mean greenlighting a pair of boxers for your son or a slightly padded bra for your daughter, but first find out why it's so important to them. These conversations over small, less consequential matters pave the way for discussions about weightier issues not so far down the road, like drug use and sexual behavior.

**You can help him look in the mirror.** Talk about what his clothes or accessories might say about him. And discuss why you drive the kind of car you do or carry that particular brand of purse. It will also help you see where your kid is coming from. —June Corrigan