

DEVELOPING SELF-CONFIDENCE

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TEACHER'S RESOURCE BOOK

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DEVELOPING SELF-CONFIDENCE

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Having self-confidence means feeling good about yourself and your personal abilities. It is an important ingredient in successful relationships, academics, sports and much more. People who are self-confident are able to enjoy happy, productive lives. When it comes to young students, self-confidence needs to be developed slowly. At any moment, a student may feel confident or unsure, optimistic or pessimistic, in control of her choices or utterly powerless. All of these feelings are normal at different times. What is most important is the student's general level of self-confidence. Students who have a strong sense of self-confidence are able to maintain that feeling even in the face of setbacks, insults or negative reactions from others.

Self-confidence is not something that can be easily taught; it is more of a result of varied experiences in and out of the classroom. Still, educators can play an important role in helping nurture young people's self-esteem—by helping youth to develop self-awareness, promoting their personal achievements, and encouraging students to set realistic goals for themselves. Realistic goal setting is uniquely connected to self-confidence. Research has shown that students who feel confident in their personal worth and abilities are more likely to set realistic goals and achieve them than those students who do not. Achieving goals helps to increase a teen's motivation and willingness to take further positive risks. Students who are successful tend to feel more capable, therefore are more willing to try, and do not give up in the face of difficulties.

Another important reason to help youth increase their self-confidence is because research tells us that a solid foundation of self-esteem is a powerful deterrent to social problems such as dropping out, truancy, drug use, gang affiliation and adolescent suicide. A strong, self-confident individual is able to make healthy decisions regardless of peer pressure to “follow the crowd.”

Developing Self-Confidence was created to raise awareness and help young people to nurture a strong sense of identify by encouraging them to form a realistic description of their personal attributes and personal worth. Additionally, this program was created to assist your students in the identification and achievement of realistic and healthy goals. The video and activities in *Developing Self-Confidence* will empower your students to feel more confident in their abilities and believe in themselves.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After watching *Developing Self-Confidence* and participating in the class activities included in this Teacher's Resource Book, your students will be able to:

- understand the concepts of self-confidence and self-esteem
- identify ways to boost their own feelings of self-worth
- describe how self-confidence affects the way people feel about who they are and the choices they make
- detail how self-confidence is linked to self-esteem, goal achievement, relationships with others and body image
- successfully deal with barriers to personal self-confidence
- understand how self-confidence affects a person's quality of life in many subtle ways
- describe the steps involved in setting and achieving personal goals
- realize that there are many influences—positive and negative—that can affect a person's level of self-confidence
- take steps to improve their self-confidence
- identify positive self-talk statements that can be used to replace negative self-talk

Developing Self-Confidence opens with several scenes of teens using negative self-talk or relying on excuses to hide their lack of confidence. In one scene, Ben acts as if he doesn't care about trying out for the school play, despite Gina's compliments on his singing voice. Next, there's Carly, who claims she doesn't want to be on the basketball team. "I don't want to spend every afternoon in that smelly old gym. I've got better things to do." The third scene opens with Alex telling his mother his ideas for the upcoming school dance. When his mom suggests that Alex run for student government, his response is negative: "Those elections are just stupid popularity contests. I don't want to be involved in that." The final scene focuses on Maria, who is feeling insecure about giving an oral presentation in class. "Everybody's just waiting to laugh at people when they mess up. I'll be lucky if I don't make a complete fool of myself."

At this point, the program's two teen hosts introduce the topic of self-confidence. "Self-confidence means having faith in yourself. Believing that you can do something. Not being afraid to try." The hosts invite viewers to rate their own level of self-confidence by answering "yes" or "no" to these six on-screen statements.

1. I've wanted to try out for something, but I didn't because I was afraid I wasn't good enough.
2. If I think there's a chance someone might make fun of me, I won't even consider putting myself in the situation.
3. Like Maria, I often talk to myself in a negative way.
4. I use excuses like the people in the video to avoid putting myself out where others can judge me.
5. To be honest, I just don't think I have any special talent.
6. I don't need all these statements; I can tell you I'm not a self-confident person.

After the questions are done, students learn that any "yes" answer indicates a lack of self-confidence. Next, viewers are introduced to four strategies for improving self-confidence that were developed by adolescent psychologist Dr. Deborah Gatins. The first strategy is *Stop Making Excuses*. "Excuses are like smokescreens," a host points out. "They can stop someone from trying something new." Yet as one host explains, "When we don't use excuses, we have to actually deal with our feelings about the risks we want to take. When we do that we grow, and we become more self-confident."

The second strategy is *Taking Reasonable Risks*. Viewers are urged to think about why they might be afraid to try something new. It's never good to let fear stop you from taking a chance on something new. The hosts urge viewers to "try taking a chance if there is even a small possibility of success."

The program now revisits the first three scenarios to see how things might have gone differently if the characters had stopped making excuses and had taken reasonable risks instead. This time, Ben admits to being nervous about his ability to be successful in the school play. “I guess I’m sort of scared of the whole thing. I mean, I don’t know if I could sing in an audition the way I sing at home.” With some encouragement from Gina, Ben realizes that he has nothing to lose by trying out for the play.

Next, when John asks Carly why she won’t try out for the basketball team, Carly explains her fear instead of making excuses. “Look at them! Some of them have been playing ball for years. I don’t know. I’m not sure I can put in the time they all do to practice.” John is able to reassure Carly that her fear is silly and encourages her to try out for the team despite her concerns.

Next, the program rewinds through the third scene—the discussion between Alex and his mother. When Alex insists that it’s useless to run for student government, his mother asks Alex to think about the consequences of his decision. “How will you feel if you don’t even try and someone with much less talent for this kind of thing wins?” Thinking it over, Alex quickly realizes that running for a position in the student government is a reasonable risk worth taking.

The hosts review what viewers have just seen: how once the teens stopped making excuses and really expressed how they truly felt, it became obvious that they were holding themselves back for no good reason. This leads to the third strategy: *Examining Your Fears*. “Sometimes we get so worried about what others will think,” says a host, “or we get so focused on our fear of failure that we forget that we just might succeed... like Ben and the musical audition.”

If students find themselves afraid to try something new, they are encouraged to examine the consequences of taking a reasonable risk. The hosts advise viewers to ask themselves: “What’s the worst thing that could happen if you DO try?” As one host points out, “people aren’t usually made fun of when they put themselves out there. In fact, most of the time, people admire those who take a chance.”

For students who may be having self-doubts or worries about what others think, the hosts advise, “Self-doubts are normal to have, but when they almost cause [you to] panic, then it’s good to think of our fourth strategy,” which is *Identify and Change Negative Self-Talk*.

At this point the program revisits Maria, the girl who is worried about her oral report. The hosts ask viewers to identify all of the negative, self-defeating statements she makes. After listening to Maria again, the hosts explain, “When you get into this mode of self-talk, it’s like being in a whirlpool. It’s hard to swim your way out and find calm waters to make progress.”

The hosts tell viewers that in order to change their negative self-talk into something more positive, one good technique is to “try and just stop any self-talk for a few seconds, just pause, take a few breaths and try to clear your mind. If you can slow it down a bit, stop the momentum of the negative self-talk and clear your mind, you’ll have an opening for something else,” says one host. Students are encouraged to do whatever it takes to help them pause and take deep breaths that will allow them to clear their minds.

The program returns to Maria. This time around, she tries to change her negative self-talk into something more positive. Viewers see that by identifying her negative self-talk and altering her message to herself, she actually has given herself a much better chance at succeeding on her oral report. The hosts explain that the “power of positive thinking” is a real phenomenon with studies to prove its value. “It helps you build yourself up and take control over a situation.”

To wrap the program up, the hosts summarize the four strategies. They remind students to “listen to the reasons you come up with for not doing something, and think about if they sound pretty lame when you really think about them. And, remember, we’re talking about reasonable risks. No one’s telling you to put yourself out there if there is no possibility of success.” Most of the time, “the things we fear and worry about will never come true.”

For those viewers who, like Maria, keep up a steady stream of negative commentary in their heads, it’s important to constantly identify and stop that kind of negative thinking. Instead, encourages the host, “tell yourself that things will work out for the best. Let yourself consider some positive possibilities.”

The program ends by showing the happy resolution of each of the four opening scenarios.

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STUDENT ACTIVITIES

Name: _____

Pre/Post Test

Decide whether the following statements are true or false.

1. TRUE or FALSE: Once you are in a negative frame of mind, there is nothing you can do to change it. _____
2. TRUE or FALSE: Self-confidence means having faith in yourself and believing that you can do something. _____
3. TRUE or FALSE: Lack of self-confidence has a great deal to do with a person's decision to try something new. _____
4. TRUE or FALSE: Taking a reasonable risk means taking a chance if there is even a small possibility of success. _____
5. TRUE or FALSE: "I'll be lucky if I don't make a complete fool of myself" is an example of positive self-talk. _____
6. TRUE or FALSE: When young people use excuses, it shows they are growing up and becoming more confident. _____
7. TRUE or FALSE: The thought of being embarrassed, or worrying that you might fail, is not a good reason to avoid taking on a challenge. _____
8. TRUE or FALSE: A person's level of self-confidence will not change depending on the situation. _____
9. TRUE or FALSE: It is not normal to have feelings of self-doubt. _____
10. TRUE or FALSE: When you find yourself using negative self-talk, you should tell yourself that things will work out for the best and consider some positive possibilities. _____

The Answer Key to this activity appears on the next page.

Name: _____

Answer Key

- | | |
|---|-------|
| 1. TRUE or FALSE: Once you are in a negative frame of mind, there is nothing you can do to change it. | FALSE |
| 2. TRUE or FALSE: Self-confidence means having faith in yourself and believing that you can do something. | TRUE |
| 3. TRUE or FALSE: Lack of self-confidence has a great deal to do with a person's decision to try something new. | TRUE |
| 4. TRUE or FALSE: Taking a reasonable risk means taking a chance if there is even a small possibility of success. | FALSE |
| 5. TRUE or FALSE: "I'll be lucky if I don't make a complete fool of myself" is an example of positive self-talk. | FALSE |
| 6. TRUE or FALSE: When young people use excuses, it shows they are growing up and becoming more confident. | FALSE |
| 7. TRUE or FALSE: The thought of being embarrassed, or worrying that you might fail, is not a good reason to avoid taking on a challenge. | TRUE |
| 8. TRUE or FALSE: A person's level of self-confidence will not change depending on the situation. | FALSE |
| 9. TRUE or FALSE: It is not normal to have feelings of self-doubt. | FALSE |
| 10. TRUE or FALSE: When you find yourself using negative self-talk, you should tell yourself that things will work out for the best and consider some positive possibilities. | TRUE |

Name: _____

Are you as confident as you would like to be? Find out where you stand in terms of self-confidence. Take the following quiz. For each statement, circle "YES" if you agree or "NO" if you disagree. When you have finished, consult the Scoring Key on the next page and see how your score adds up.

1. In general I am happy with myself.	YES	NO
2. I am pleased with the way I look.	YES	NO
3. I don't let my fear of failure get in the way of taking reasonable risks.	YES	NO
4. I am able to accept criticism without getting upset.	YES	NO
5. If things don't go my way, I keep on trying to achieve my goal.	YES	NO
6. I encourage myself to try new things instead of putting myself down.	YES	NO
7. I am willing to ask for help when I need it.	YES	NO
8. I like the challenge of trying new things.	YES	NO
9. When I am critical of myself or use negative self-talk, I try to replace my negative thoughts with positive ones.	YES	NO
10. I have goals and expectations for myself.	YES	NO

The Scoring Key for this activity appears on the following page.

Name: _____

Give yourself one point for every YES answer.

Scoring Key

- 9 - 10: Great! You have lots of confidence in yourself. Keep it up!
- 6 - 8: You are somewhat satisfied with yourself and your abilities. Keep heading in that confident direction! Give yourself a pep talk from time to time when you find yourself doubting your abilities.
- 3 - 5: You lack a bit of self-confidence. Take some time and focus on your strengths. Write down three things that you like about yourself and post them on your mirror so you can remember them every morning. Learn how to replace negative thoughts with positive self-talk.
- Below 3: It can't be that bad! Cheer up and find something good about yourself. Remember that what makes you different from other people is also what makes you special and unique. You need to build yourself UP, not down!

Name: _____

PIECES OF THE PUZZLE

Do you know what it takes to have self-confidence? In this puzzle, find the words that are related to self-confidence. Circle those words. To make this puzzle more challenging, there are words in it that are associated with negative self-esteem, too. Circle those words in a different color. (Words may be written vertically, horizontally or diagonally.)

M	A	T	T	I	T	U	D	E	R	F	E	A	R
E	S	C	R	A	B	O	R	N	I	A	V	M	O
V	E	N	C	O	U	R	A	G	E	M	E	N	T
W	H	S	N	S	V	E	S	T	O	U	S	A	Y
O	L	E	W	A	K	I	P	S	B	A	T	S	I
R	O	A	E	B	C	M	O	E	U	M	L	O	S
R	E	A	S	O	N	A	B	L	E	R	I	S	K
Y	X	G	E	D	A	M	R	F	N	E	R	T	E
R	C	Y	T	Y	P	L	G	T	J	O	F	X	L
Y	U	R	O	I	I	E	F	A	I	L	U	R	E
E	S	R	O	M	E	B	O	L	S	M	O	E	E
B	E	W	E	A	L	R	O	K	N	N	Y	S	K
I	S	H	J	G	C	A	K	R	D	Q	N	A	E
S	U	C	C	E	S	S	E	S	F	T	P	O	N

Positive words

- reasonable risk
- self-talk
- goals
- successes
- attitude
- body image
- encouragement

Negative words

- fear
- worry
- excuses
- failure
- lose

The Answer Key for this activity appears on the next page.

Name: _____

Answer Key

M	A	T	T	I	T	U	D	E	R	F	E	A	R
E	S	C	R	A	B	O	R	N	I	A	V	M	O
V	E	N	C	O	U	R	A	G	E	M	E	N	T
W	H	S	N	S	V	E	S	T	O	U	S	A	Y
O	L	E	W	A	K	I	P	S	B	A	T	S	I
R	O	A	E	B	C	M	O	E	U	M	L	O	S
R	E	A	S	O	N	A	B	L	E	R	I	S	K
Y	X	G	E	D	A	M	R	F	N	E	R	T	E
R	C	Y	T	Y	P	L	G	T	J	O	F	X	L
Y	U	R	O	I	I	E	F	A	I	L	U	R	E
E	S	R	O	M	E	B	O	L	S	M	O	E	E
B	E	W	E	A	L	R	O	K	N	N	Y	S	K
I	S	H	J	G	C	A	K	R	D	Q	N	A	E
S	U	C	C	E	S	S	E	S	F	T	P	O	N

Name: _____

For each letter of the word confidence, create a sentence that describes one step you can take to build up your own self-confidence. An example is given below:

- C Clearly define my goals.
- O Optimistic thoughts can help me feel confident.
- N Notice when I use negative self-talk and replace those statements with more positive thoughts.
- F Feel good about my differences.
- I Identify successes I have had that have made me feel happy and proud.
- D Describe my strengths.
- E Encourage myself and others to take reasonable (and responsible) risks.
- N Never let negative self-talk get in the way of trying new things.
- C Confide in a trusted friend about worries and fears.
- E Enjoy taking reasonable risks and learning new things.

Now it's your turn:

C	
O	
N	
F	
I	
D	
E	
N	
C	
E	

Name: _____

RETRAIN YOUR BRAIN

Do you ever criticize or put yourself down? That’s called “negative self-talk” and it gets in the way of developing your self-confidence. It’s time to retrain your brain so that you have good things to say to yourself. Practice replacing your negative thoughts with positive thoughts. See the fact sheet called *Replacing the Negative with the Positive* for more information on how to retrain your brain.

In the blank spaces below, write down at least five examples of negative thoughts you tend to have about yourself. For each one, think of a positive thought you can tell yourself instead.

Negative Thoughts	Positive Thoughts
<i>I am no good at science.</i> <i>I am no good at sports.</i> <i>I will mess this up.</i> <i>I didn't try hard enough.</i>	<i>I can study and do well in science.</i> <i>I like soccer and can practice to do well.</i> <i>I can do this. All I need to do is try my best.</i> <i>If I don't do well, I will try harder next time.</i>

Name: _____

Have you ever wanted to do something but talked yourself out of it? Sometimes we don't take risks or aim for certain goals because we let our fear of failure get in the way. Consider this: if you weren't afraid of failing, what reasonable risks might you take?

PART ONE: For each of the categories below, write down clear, specific and realistic goals that you can attain in the amount of time listed. Be sure your goals are very specific and reasonable—they should be goals that are possible to accomplish in that amount of time.

Reasonable goals I will accomplish by:

Tomorrow:

1.	
2.	

Next weekend:

1.	
2.	

Next month:

1.	
2.	

The end of school year:

1.	
2.	

This activity is continued on the next page.

Name: _____

PART TWO: Choose one of your goals from the previous page and list the specific actions you will take in order to achieve this goal. Make sure you give lots of details on how you will progress from one step to the next. Use more paper if necessary.

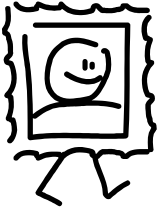
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	
6.	
7.	
8.	
9.	
10.	

Remember, say positive things to yourself and congratulate yourself for having the courage to try new things!

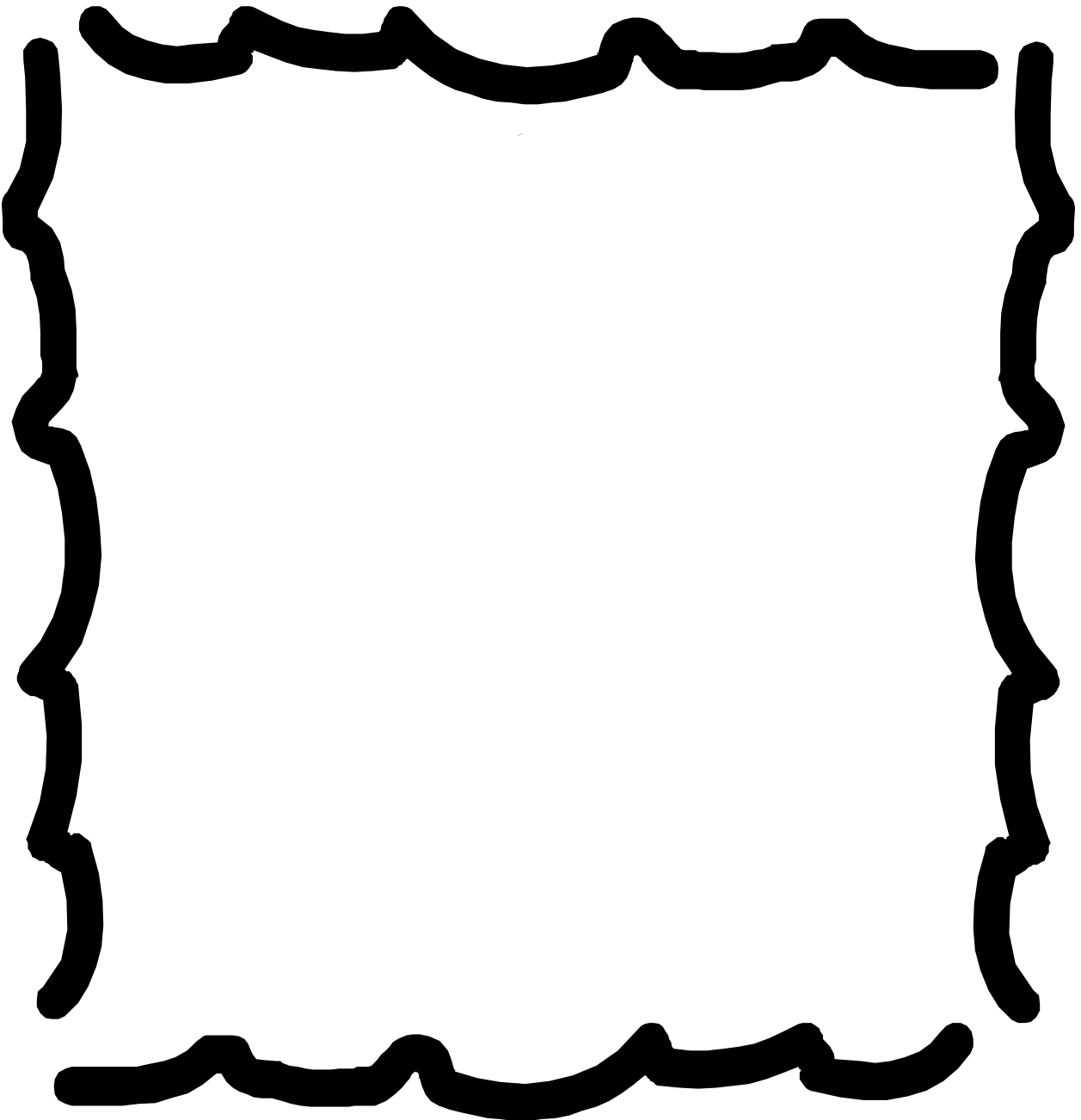
Name: _____

ACTIVITY 7

WHAT DOES SELF-CONFIDENCE LOOK LIKE?



Using what you have learned about self-confidence, construct a picture of a confident person. Don't be afraid to be creative! Use pictures, photos from magazines, your own drawings or words that display how a confident person looks, stands, acts, speaks, behaves and so on. You can create your picture in the frame below, or on a separate sheet of paper.



Name: _____

HOW DO YOU SEE YOURSELF?

Being happy with your appearance can affect your self-esteem and your confidence. You don't have to be a movie star in order to be happy with the way you look. No matter what you see on the big screen, remember that nobody's perfect. We all are special and unique in our own ways. What can help you stay confident about yourself is hidden in the message below. Finish the missing words and put the numbered letters in the blanks at the bottom to learn an important part of being confident.

- The feelings or perception that we have about our bodies is called
b _ _ _ ₇ _ _ _ ₃ _ _ _ _ .
- Few people look as **p** _ _ _ ₅ _ _ _ ₁₁ _ _ _ _ as the actors we see in the movies.
- Wearing trendy **c** _ _ _ ₁₀ _ _ _ _ _ doesn't guarantee popularity.
- It's **n** _ _ _ ₆ _ _ _ _ for your body to change as you grow.
- Good **f** _ _ _ ₉ _ _ _ _ are those who like you for who you are.
- E** _ _ _ _ _ ₁ _ _ _ ₈ _ _ _ helps you control your weight and gain confidence.
- When you look at yourself in a mirror, concentrate on feeling good about yourself and don't worry about how you _ _ _ ₂ _ _ _ ₄ _ _ _ to others.

Message:

_____ !

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11

The Answer Key for this activity appears on the next page.

Name: _____

Answer Key

1. The feelings or perception that we have about our bodies is called body image.
2. Few people look as perfect as the actors we see in the movies.
3. Wearing trendy clothes doesn't guarantee popularity.
4. It's normal for your body to change as you grow.
5. Good friends are those who like you for who you are.
6. Exercise helps you control your weight and gain confidence.
7. When you look at yourself in a mirror, concentrate on feeling good about yourself and don't worry about how you look to others.

Answer:

I like myself!

Name: _____

SELF-CONFIDENCE DIARY

Different situations can affect how confident you feel. Keep track of situations that affect your self-confidence in the chart below. For the next three days, make a list of good and bad things that happen to you. For each one, explain how the event made you feel, what you did to handle the situation, and what you might do the next time something like that happens.

This is what happened...	This is how it made me feel...	This is what I did about it...	This is what I could do next time

Name: _____

Imagine that you are in charge of writing an advice column for your school newspaper. Below are two letters written by students in your school. How would you respond to these notes? Write your responses on the back of this page or on a separate sheet of paper. Be prepared to share your ideas with your classmates.

Dear I.M. Confident,

Help! I am the shortest kid in my class. Everyone is taller than I am. I went to see a doctor who told me that my height was still normal for my age, just on the "small size" side of the chart. He also said it was nothing to worry about. But I am so embarrassed. All my friends call me *shrimp* and *shorty*. What should I do?

Signed - Am I Normal?

Dear I.M. Confident,

I'm new here at school and I have a terrible case of nerves! I am not from this country so I look different and have different kinds of clothes. I'm so worried about how I look that I can't even talk during class discussions! Soccer season is coming up and I really want to try out for the school team. I used to be a really good soccer player on my team back home, but because I feel so different from everyone else, I am way too embarrassed to go for it. What should I do?

Signed - Nervous

Name: _____

Imagine that you are one of the top three finalists in a “Special You” contest. To claim your award, you must create your own statement about what makes you special and your accomplishments. For instance, you can create:

- ★ A 60-second television commercial or video
- ★ A collage of photographs or drawings
- ★ A collection of poems and/or essays
- ★ A song or jingle to be played on the radio

Your concept can be as humorous or as serious as you wish. The only rule is this: *it must successfully highlight your positive and healthy qualities and accomplishments that make you feel good about yourself.* To help you get started, answer the following questions:

What medium will you use for your statement: images, words, sounds?

Will you use humor? If so, can you be sure your joke won't get misinterpreted?

Sum up your concept briefly here.

If time allows, create your statement. Be prepared to share it with your class.

FACT SHEETS

Name: _____

Self-confidence is having confidence in yourself and your own abilities.

When people feel confident, they believe that they will achieve some level of success at whatever they are trying to do. Students who feel good about themselves and their abilities are most likely to succeed. Students who are unsure of themselves or who expect to fail usually stop trying and just give up.

What does a self-confident person look and act like? When a person has a strong level of self-confidence, he or she:

- ★ takes reasonable risks
- ★ is aware of strengths and positive characteristics
- ★ accepts his or her weaknesses and uses mistakes as a learning tool
- ★ can handle disappointment or failures
- ★ recognizes accomplishments and achievements
- ★ uses positive self-talk

What can influence a person's self-confidence? Lots of things can make someone feel confident. Below is a list of many of the people or events that can influence the way a person feels about his or her abilities. These include:

- | | |
|----------------------------|-----------------------|
| ★ parents and families | ★ age |
| ★ peers | ★ physical appearance |
| ★ other significant people | ★ social environment |
| ★ success and failures | ★ schools |

What can you do to increase your level of self-confidence? One way to increase your level of self-confidence is to become more self-accepting. Self-acceptance refers to your belief in your own abilities. Your attitude about your own achievements can influence whether or not you continue to try to achieve other things. To be more self-accepting:

- ★ Become aware of your interests, roles, and attributes that make you who you are.
- ★ Accept your unique and distinct differences. Feeling confident in yourself begins with knowing that others will like you for all that you are, not just for how you look or what sports you play.

Name: _____

Self-esteem is how you see yourself and how you feel about the things you do and your achievements.

Why is self-esteem important?

Feeling good about yourself and your abilities is important because it affects everything you do. It influences the decisions you make, how you communicate with others and gives you the courage to take reasonable risks and achieve your goals. It helps you to believe in yourself and your abilities. And if you make a mistake, having good self-esteem can help you to bounce back and congratulate yourself for at least trying.

Generally, a person with low self-esteem:

- ★ doesn't want to share his ideas or opinions
- ★ is unwilling to take reasonable risks
- ★ acts helpless and is dependent on others in areas where he should be able to perform on his own
- ★ doesn't perform tasks because of a fear of failure or insecurity (has an "I can't" attitude or doesn't try)
- ★ is a poor loser
- ★ uses negative self-talk regarding accomplishments
- ★ wishes he were different in some way, such as looking differently, being a better athlete or being more popular

A person with high self-esteem:

- ★ takes care of her body by eating nutritious foods, exercising and engaging in other healthy activities
- ★ focuses on her strengths
- ★ is eager to try new things, challenges and take reasonable risks
- ★ sets realistic goals
- ★ is aware of her strengths and positive characteristics
- ★ accepts her weaknesses and uses her mistakes as a learning tool
- ★ shares her opinions and ideas
- ★ displays good sportsmanship and handles failure or defeat in healthy ways
- ★ recognizes her own accomplishments and achievements
- ★ uses positive self-talk

Name: _____

**SELF-CONCEPT
AND BODY IMAGE**

What is self-concept?

Self-concept is your own perception of who you are and what you look like. It is the description you would use about yourself. Each of us has feelings about ourselves. This description may or may not be accurate or realistic. That's because there are many things that can influence how we see ourselves. For instance:

- ★ our interactions with other people
- ★ our observations about our own behavior
- ★ what we notice about how others behave toward us

What is body image?

Body image is the feeling that we have about our body, or the mental representation of our body. Think of it as your level of satisfaction with your body.

People with a healthy body image like how they look. They lead a healthy lifestyle. But they don't go to extremes—they are careful to keep themselves from excessive dieting or dangerous habits. Research has found that people who have negative feelings about their bodies are more likely to have negative feelings about themselves and as a result, have lower self-esteem.

There are many influences on body image.

- ★ Television, movies and magazines highlight beauty standards for both boys and girls. These standards are unrealistic for anyone to achieve.
- ★ Family members may influence body image by telling us to diet or by making fun of the way we look.
- ★ At school, students may taunt classmates about their physical appearance, hairstyle or clothing.
- ★ Ourselves! We may put ourselves down with criticisms about our body shapes—too fat, too skinny, too tall, too short...

All of these influences can make a person feel insecure and as though they are not good enough. But no one should feel bad about how they look. And they shouldn't compare themselves to others. Having an unrealistic body image can lead to health problems, such as eating disorders and other problems. Body image problems are also linked to depression. Depression is a mental illness in which people feel "down" or even hopeless all the time. Instead, a person should learn to appreciate his or her own special and unique characteristics.

This fact sheet is continued on the next page.

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**SELF-CONCEPT
AND BODY IMAGE**

How can you have a better self-image?

First, make sure you are realistic about your looks. Realize that your body is changing as well as growing and that much of how you look can't be changed. It was determined by genetics. There's not much that you can do to change your body, so you should learn to appreciate the way you look.

Second, like yourself for who you are. Stop putting yourself down. Focus on the things that you like about your body. And don't just think about your physical characteristics. They are only one part of who you are. Are you good at math? Do you have a great sense of humor? What do you like about yourself? Make a list and use it to remind yourself of what a neat person you are on the outside and on the inside.

What are some ways to build your self-esteem?

There are many things you can do to help build your self-esteem. These include:

- ★ identifying the things that make you feel good
- ★ practicing positive self-talk
- ★ identifying and appreciating your strengths
- ★ picturing yourself being successful
- ★ hanging out with people who make you feel good and like you for who you are

By focusing on your positive qualities, you can learn to like and accept everything about yourself.

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Have you ever wanted to make a sports team? Have you ever wanted to save money to buy a new video game? If you answered yes to these questions, you have set goals for yourself. A **goal** is something that you are trying to achieve. Achieving goals helps people feel successful and that can help a person feel more confident about themselves and their abilities. Listed below are some guidelines for setting goals.

1. What is it that you want to achieve?
Picture and understand what it is you want to accomplish. A goal should tell you exactly what you want and should be measurable. For example, "I want to score ten goals in soccer this season," is both clear and specific.
2. Where are you now and what is your next step?
Think about where you are now and what you need to do next to achieve this goal.
3. Create a plan and write it down.
To achieve your goal, you need to create a plan. A plan will break your goal down into smaller steps. For example, if your ultimate goal is to be a professional basketball player, a realistic, specific short-term goal would be to make the varsity basketball team this year. Write your plan down. And while you are writing down what you need to do, also think about any important resources, such as other people or other things that you will need to help you achieve your goal. Write your plan down. Keep your written goals where you can see them to help you stay focused on achieving them.
4. Set time limits.
Think about when you will start and when you want to finish. Make sure your timeline is reasonable.
5. Check your progress.
As you work on achieving your goal, evaluate your progress. How far have you come and how far do you still have to go? Are you doing what needs to be done to meet your goal? If not, what can you do to get back on target?
6. Evaluate how well you did.
When your time deadline is up, examine whether or not you achieved the results you set out to achieve. If you reached your goal, what new goals can you aim for? If you did not reach your goal, think about what you can do differently next time in order to be successful. Rewrite your plan and/or your goal so that you may succeed this time.

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**REPLACING THE NEGATIVE
WITH THE POSITIVE**

Our thoughts and beliefs can make us feel good or bad about ourselves. *Self-talk* is like a conversation you have with yourself inside of your head. Certain thoughts can make you feel confident while others can make you feel insecure or feel like giving up. By saying negative things over and over to yourself (“I can’t do anything right,” or “I’m ugly”) you can make yourself feel bad and promote a negative sense of self.

Some negative or self-defeating thoughts are difficult to change, but with practice they can be revised into more positive talk. To help change your negative self-talk into positive talk:

- ★ Pay close attention to what you say to yourself.
- ★ Recognize the negative messages you say in your mind. These often have certain words attached to them, such as “I should have,” or “I never” or “I always.”

When you hear negative comments inside your head, tell yourself to stop. Try giving yourself a compliment every day. Don’t just say, “I’m great!” Be specific about something you like about yourself or something you have done well! For instance, “I was a good friend to Bianca today” or “I made an awesome goal in practice!”

Practice taking the negative message and turning it into something realistic. Here are some examples of turning a negative message into a positive one:

Negative Self-Talk	Positive Self-Talk
To be popular, I should be good at everything!	I can’t expect to be perfect at everything.
I should be liked by almost everyone.	No one is liked by everyone. It is unrealistic to think that everyone will like me all the time.

Name: _____

Selves are not born but made.

—Ashley Montague

All that we are is a result of what we have thought.

—Buddha

You know where self-esteem comes from? It comes from peers, from being liked, accepted and connected.

—David Johnson

If you think in positive terms, you will achieve positive results.

—Norman Vincent Peale

People with goals succeed because they know where they are going.

—Earl Nightingale

He who thinks he can, can, and he can't who thinks he can't.

—Orison Sweet Marden

Self-esteem and self-contempt have specific odors; they can be smelled.

—Eric Hoffer

Without self-confidence we are as babes in the cradles.

—Virginia Woolf

You have confidence in yourself, which is a valuable, if not an indispensable, quality.

—Abraham Lincoln

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Each of us is special in our own way. Understanding and liking yourself is important. That's because it can affect your decisions. It also gives you the courage to try new things. And it gives you the power to believe you can succeed in whatever you do.

Sometimes it can be hard to like yourself. What can you do if you start to feel bad about who you are? Plenty! Try one of these ideas, or come up with one of your own self-boosters:

Make a list.

Write down all the things you are good at doing. It can be anything such as telling a story or throwing a Frisbee. If you have trouble, ask a family member or friend to help you with your list. Put your list in a place where you will see it. Look at it any time you need to remind yourself how great you really are.

Draw a picture.

Draw a picture of yourself on a sheet of paper. Identify all of the things you like about yourself—both on the outside and on the inside. List these things all around and inside your body shape. Tape this to your mirror and review it anytime you start to put yourself down.

Be yourself.

Instead of following the “popular” group or the latest trends, do what makes you feel good. Develop your own unique style. Use good grooming to highlight your special features.

Talk to someone.

If you are feeling bad about yourself and nothing seems to help, try talking to a trusted adult. He or she may be able to help you come up with some good ideas for getting you to like yourself again.

Practice positive self-talk.

By focusing on the good things you do and all of your great qualities, you can learn to like and accept yourself for who you are. And these strategies are good to use when other people are having doubts about who they are. Help your friends make a list of their positive traits and the reasons why they are special.

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<i>Curriculum in a Box: Succeeding in Middle School</i>	10 video curriculum
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