Background

This session aims to increase students’ awareness of their own self-concept with a view to identifying and promoting positive aspects of self. Students will begin to think about the characteristics that define them so they may increase self-awareness. A positive self-concept is important for psychological health. Increased self-awareness is the foundation for learning to promote more positive aspects of self and learning to accept our less positive characteristics or, alternatively, for taking steps to change these.

Also introduced in this session is the concept of self-esteem. Having high self-esteem (in other words, feeling good about yourself, being accepting of yourself, feeling confident, and liking yourself) is related to feeling good generally, and to positive mental health outcomes. Students will be introduced to the idea that self-esteem may change from time to time and that it is possible to build up self-esteem.

Self-esteem is made up of several domains of self. Some of the broad self-esteem domains for young people are social, school, personal characteristics, family, and interests/sports. These domains together form an individual’s overall or global self-esteem. Different domains tend to be more important for some people than others. By having students identify positive personal characteristics across all of these domains, it is hoped they will see that all domains have some value and that taken together they make up a unique individual.

Learning outcomes

Students will evaluate the influences on self-concept, self-esteem and resilience.

In this session students will:
• describe how their self-concept is influenced by their thoughts, behaviour, and engagement in different contexts, e.g. family, group membership.

Students will describe ways people define their own and others’ identity.

In this session students will:
• define themselves using personal characteristics; and
• identify some of their own personal strengths.
session outline

- Review
- Activity 1. Who am I?
- Optional/alternative activity
- Activity 2. Self-esteem and my Self Star Rating
- Activity 3. ‘That’s fantastic, but I once...!’
- Activity 4. My strengths
- Reflection
- Home tasks

Preparation/resources

No additional resources required.
### Review [2–10 mins]

1. Review the previous session — e.g. adolescent images and stereotyping, and the challenges and transitions in adolescence.
2. Review home tasks
3. Link to this session.

### Points to make

- The last session focused on images of adolescents as portrayed by the media and society. Today’s session is about your own self-concept and the way you define yourself.

### Hint

The home task is likely to generate an interesting discussion. It is also an important and useful link to this session. If time allows, teachers could extend the time allocated for the home task review.

In future sessions, home tasks involve much more personal reflection. Therefore, in-depth review of home tasks is not recommended in later sessions.
Process
1. Refer students to page 30 of the Student Workbook. Have them complete the ‘Defining me’ activity individually.
2. Ask students to start thinking about self-concept.

Points to make
- While you all may have many things in common (like being students at the same school, being of similar age and going through similar changes) there are many other things that make you all different.
- For example, you all have different likes and dislikes, different talents and skills, different cultural or family backgrounds, and you have all had a different range of experiences.
- Our self-concept, or the way we think about ourselves, is made up of all these things — the similarities that we share with others and the things that make us different and unique.

3. As a class, brainstorm some of the things that might help to make up an adolescent’s self-concept.
4. Ask students to try to think of some other ways they might define themselves. Refer students to page 31 of the Student Workbook and have them complete the ‘I am …’ statements.

Purpose
Students will begin to reflect on how they think of themselves with a view to increasing self-awareness.

Examples of influences on self-concept:
- culture or family background
- gender
- likes/dislikes
- abilities (in different areas like school, sports, musical, etc.)
- personal qualities
- religion or beliefs and values
- group or team membership
- feedback from others.

Examples of ‘I am …’ statements
- I am a son/daughter/brother/sister
- I am a soccer player
- I am a bit untidy
- I am a good guitar player
- I am a good listener
- I am a Grinspoon fan
- I am a chocoholic
- I am against nuclear weapons
- I am Jewish
- I am better at Maths than English
5. Discussion

- Did you come up with ways to define yourself that you have never thought about before?
- By thinking about and listing some of your defining characteristics, do you see yourself differently?
- Do you feel more connection by thinking about groups you belong to?
- Why might it be useful to be more aware of who we are and how we define ourselves?

Points to make

- We all have good and not-so-good personal qualities — even those ‘ideal’ people we see in the media.
- We don’t have to (and can’t) be good at everything. How boring life would be if we were all the same!
- We may want to take steps to change some of our not-so-good qualities; others we may just accept as part of our individuality.

Optional/alternative activity

- Research has shown that individuals from some cultures may have difficulty completing ‘I am...’ statements.
- As an alternative, students could think of a symbol which defines and describes them. Symbols could be objects or animals or any other concept that they feel suits them.
- Refer students to page 32 of the Student Workbook and have them draw the symbol and then list some of the characteristics that the symbol represents for them.

Hint

If teachers feel comfortable, they may like to use some of their own self-defining or ‘I am’ statements as examples.

Hint

Reassure students that they do not have to share this information with anyone.

Optional/alternative activity

This may also be more suitable for students with written language difficulties.
• **Activity 2. Self-esteem — my Self Star Rating**  
  
  **Process**

1. As a class, discuss ‘What is self-esteem?’
2. Discuss the way self-esteem may change and what might influence self-esteem. Ask questions like:
   - Why does self-esteem change and what are the things that make it change?
   - What are the advantages of feeling good about yourself or having high self-esteem?
   - What problems might there be if feeling down on yourself or having low self-esteem?
   - Is it possible to improve your own self-esteem? If so, what might be some ways to do that?

  **Points to make**

  - *The way you feel about yourself, or how you rate yourself is called ‘self-esteem’. Self-esteem is to do with self-acceptance, feeling confident, and liking yourself.*
  - *Everyone’s feelings about themselves can change from day-to-day, sometimes moment-to-moment, and are affected by many different situations/events.*
  - *Nobody feels good about themselves all the time.*
  - *People sometimes respond differently to the same event — how we feel about ourselves is partly affected by the expectations we have of ourselves.*

3. Ask students to think about how they are feeling about themselves today. Refer them to page 34 of the Student Workbook and have them rate their current self-esteem on the Self Star Rating scale.

  **Purpose**

  *To help students to begin reflecting on their own self-esteem, and thinking about the range of influences on self-esteem.*

  **Definitions of ‘self-esteem’**

  - *the way you feel about yourself*
  - *self acceptance*
  - *feeling confident*
  - *liking yourself*
  - *thinking you’re OK*

  **Self-esteem is not fixed and it can and does change.**

  **Lots of things can influence self-esteem.**

  **You can learn to build up your self-esteem.**

  **The rating scale is explained in the Student Workbook.**
**Activity 3. That’s fantastic, but I once...! [5 mins]**

**Process**

1. As a class or in large groups (10 or more), one person starts by stating an exaggerated achievement, for example, ‘I once flew to the moon and back in a day.’ Or, ‘I once sailed down the Amazon in a bathtub.’ The next person then tries to beat that statement with some other exaggeration and starts the statement with ‘That’s fantastic, but I once...’, and so on, with each person trying to out-exaggerate the last.

2. Continue until everyone has a turn or, depending on time and size of groups, keep going around until no one can think of any more responses.

**Purpose**

This activity is a fun link to the idea of identifying our strengths to help build self-esteem.

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**Activity 4. My strengths [8–10 mins]**

**Process**

1. Discuss the concept of wearing different hats and our different self-esteem contexts.

**Points to make**

- We all wear several different hats! That is, we all have different roles in the different contexts of our lives.
- For example, you are students, you are also sons or daughters, brothers or sisters, friends, members of particular groups such as sports teams or student councils and so on.
- These are our many ‘selves’ and they all influence our self-esteem.
- The main contexts for our different ‘selves’ are social, school, family, personal characteristics and interests/sports.
- Some contexts are more important to us than others. We may also have more strengths in one context than in another.
- However, all our ‘selves’ add up to make us the unique individuals that we are.

**Purpose**

Students will be able to identify their own strengths in a number of different self-esteem contexts.
2. Refer students to page 35 of the Student Workbook. There is a table of the five main contexts or ‘selves’ that inform young people’s self-esteem. Within each context are some personal strengths that an adolescent may have. Have students circle the statements that apply to them.

3. Then have students generate some of their own personal strengths and write these in each context box.

**Reflection [4–5 mins]**

Refer students to page 36 of the Student Workbook. Ask students to complete the following tasks:

- Rate your current self-esteem using the Self Star Rating.
- Compare it with the Self Star Rating you did earlier (on page 34).
- Do you think listing some personal strengths made you feel differently about yourself? If so, why might this be?
- Of the five self-esteem contexts — social, school, family, personal characteristics and interests/sports — which are the most important to you and why?
- Write down two or three things that you believe are most important for building self-esteem.

**Home tasks [1–2 mins]**

Refer students to page 37 of the Student Workbook. The home tasks for this week are:

- Over the next week, use the Self Star Rating to take regular ratings of your self-esteem.
  Pay attention to how your star ratings change. In particular, write down the things that help you to feel good over the next week.