Background

Following on from the last session on self-esteem, students will be developing the awareness that their self-esteem varies, and that it is possible to influence their self-esteem positively. 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. It is therefore important for students to recognise some of the factors which may influence self-esteem.

In particular, the way we think about ourselves can have a major effect on how we feel about ourselves. For example, having unrealistic expectations of ourselves can lead to a mismatch between ideal self and self-concept and reduce self-esteem. Self-talk (internal statements we use relating to/describing the self) can have a powerful influence on self-esteem. By becoming aware of how self-talk can affect self-esteem, and therefore general well-being, students may begin to monitor their own use of self-talk, and begin to use more positive self-talk and self-praise to build self-esteem. This session will convey the idea that self-esteem can be enhanced or reduced by self-talk, and will encourage students to begin monitoring their own self-talk and its impact on self-esteem.

Learning outcomes

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

In this session, students will:
• reflect on the relationship between self-talk and self-esteem.

Students will recommend and demonstrate skills that promote a positive self-concept and resilience.

In this session, students will:
• begin to evaluate their self-talk; and
• generate and use self-praising statements.
session outline

- Review
- Activity 1. Sorting self-descriptions
- Activity 2. Self-talk
- Reflection
- Activity 3. Practising self-praise
- Home tasks

Preparation/resources

- Photocopy Resource 4.1 — Attribute Cards — for each student in the class. (These can be cut out by the students during the activity.)
- Scissors
Building self-esteem and positive self-talk

**Review** [2–3 mins]

1. Review the previous session — e.g. self-concept and self-esteem.
2. Review home tasks — what did students notice about their Self Star Ratings over the week?
3. Link to current session.

**Points to make**

- Your level of self-esteem varies. Lots of things influence the way you feel about yourself.
- It is possible to build up your self-esteem.
- One of the ways to do this is to change the way you talk to yourself.

**Activity 1. Sorting self-descriptions** [8–10 mins]

**Process**

1. Distribute Resource 4.1 — Attribute Cards — to each student. Have students cut (or tear) them out.
2. Refer students to page 40 of the Student Workbook. Explain that students will be working individually to sort personal attribute cards into categories (a) exactly like me, (b) a bit like me, (c) not much like me, or (d) not at all like me. Categories are represented in the table on page 40 of the Student Workbook.
3. Have students record those attributes that are ‘Exactly like you’ or ‘A bit like you’ in the table.
4. Ask students to reflect on and discuss briefly how the way we describe ourselves may influence self-esteem.

**Purpose**

This activity encourages students to reflect further on self-concept, and on the relationship between the way they describe themselves and self-esteem.
**Activity 2. Self-talk** [15–20 mins]

**Process**

1. Refer students to page 41 of the Student Workbook. Have students read the scenario ‘A day in the life of Katie’.

2. Then in pairs or groups, have them discuss and answer Question 2 about the way Katie is thinking (her self-talk).
   - What are some of the unhelpful things that Katie might be saying to herself? Write Katie’s self-talk in the thought bubbles on page 42 of the Student Workbook.

3. Have students share their answers with the class.

4. Discuss the concept of self-talk.
   - What is it? Are we aware of it? What influence does it have? Can we change it?

**Points to make**

- **Self-talk is the way we speak to ourselves — the words we say to ourselves in our head — sometimes even out loud.**

- **We are not always aware of it — it is often automatic and unconscious although we can become aware if we STOP and LISTEN to ourselves.**

- **If our self-talk is negative or unhelpful, we won’t feel very good about ourselves.**

5. Refer the students to Question 3. In pairs (or groups), have students look over the scenario, and identify and list some of Katie’s positive qualities or characteristics.

6. Model an example of how Katie’s unhelpful self-talk can be changed to more positive or helpful self-talk.

7. Refer students to Question 4. Have the pairs (or groups) think about some alternative self-talk that would be more helpful for Katie. Record the alternative self-talk in the thought bubbles.

8. Discuss responses as a class.

**Purpose**

Students will develop an understanding of the concept of self-talk and will be able to identify unhelpful (negative) self-talk and generate more helpful (positive) alternatives.

We can change our self-talk by becoming aware of the things we say to ourselves and changing negative and unhelpful self-talk to more positive and helpful talk.

For example:

**Instead of thinking, ‘I must look clumsy and stupid’, Katie might think ‘I only spilled the orange juice and fell over because I’m rushing. At least I was able to help out at home this morning’.**
**Reflection [4–5 mins]**

Refer students to page 45 of the Student Workbook. Ask students to complete the following tasks:

- Can you think of any times recently when you have used negative or unhelpful self-talk? What did you say to yourself?
- Can you think of any alternative, more helpful things you could have said to yourself?

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**Activity 3. Practising self-praise [5–10 mins]**

**Process**

1. Refer students back to page 35 where they identified their strengths in the different self contexts. Ask students to select one personal strength from each context and devise a self-praising statement, where possible giving an example of how this statement applies to them (see examples). Ask students to follow the steps starting on page 46 of the Student Workbook.

2. Ask students to say these self-praising statements to themselves (silently).

3. Discuss students’ reactions to using self-praise.
   
   Suggested questions:
   
   - What was it like to praise yourself?
   - Was it hard to do? Why or why not?
   - Do you think regular use of self-praise would make a difference to your self-esteem?

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**Purpose**

_Students will practise using positive self-talk in the first person and will reflect on how it feels to praise themselves._

**Examples of positive/self-praising statements**

- **Strength:** sense of humour
  
  **Statement:** “I have a good sense of humour; I can laugh at myself.”

- **Strength:** caring
  
  **Statement:** “I am a caring person; I try to support my friends when they have a problem.”
Refer students to page 48 of the Student Workbook. This week’s home tasks are:

- Over the next week, practise saying those self-praising statements to yourself each day. You may want to look in the mirror when you say them. You may also want to think about how this affects your Self Star Rating.

- Another task is to make a note to stop yourself whenever you use unhelpful or negative self-talk. Use an alternative, more helpful statement instead. Do this for the week and think about whether this also affects your Self Star Rating.
activity 1  Sorting self-descriptions

Photocopy the following page of Personal Attribute Cards for each student.
Students can cut or tear these out during the activity.