



## ACTIVITY: 'I AM A PENCIL'

**TIME:** 10–30 minutes  
**SIZE:** Individuals  
**SPACE:** Room to both sit and move around  
**RESOURCES:** Pens and paper

**The aim** is to think about an object in a helpful, positive way, and then for students to apply that thinking to themselves.

**The result** should be an appreciation that each of us can discover that we have a number of very good qualities we might not have considered.

1. Bring the class into a quiet, focused mood and have everyone look around the room and silently choose an object (e.g. pencil, clock, chair, air-conditioner, shoe.).
2. Everyone now thinks about that object. Is it unique or common? What is its purpose: utilitarian, artistic, informational? How might it feel to **be** that object?
3. Everyone now lists three undesirable qualities about that object. For instance, if it is a pencil, undesirable qualities might be that it is common, uninteresting, and easily broken.
4. Ask students to take a moment to assume those negative qualities are their own. Have them take a minute, and quickly write down how possessing those negative qualities might make them feel (e.g. low, unhappy, unmotivated).
5. Now ask everyone to write a counter-list of three or more good qualities about the same object e.g. if it is a pencil, they might write that it is sharp, colourful and reliable.
6. Now ask students to assume these good qualities as their own. Have them take a moment to quickly write down how possessing these good qualities makes them feel (e.g. energised, confident, capable).
7. Quickly go around the class, asking (some or all) students to introduce themselves and their good qualities, e.g. 'Hi, I'm Jamie, I am a pencil. I am sharp, colourful, and reliable!'
8. Stop the activity. Commence discussion.



## DISCUSSION SUGGESTIONS

- Was it easy or hard to think of some negative qualities for your object?
- Was it easy or hard to think of some good qualities for your object?
- What were some of the feelings that you associated with the negative qualities?
- What were some of the feelings that you associated with the good qualities?
- How easy do you think it might be to think up three good qualities about yourself? (Consider trying this if time permits.) Is it easier or harder to list your good qualities than to be self-critical? Why might that be?
- Discuss the importance of challenging unhelpful self-talk with helpful self-talk (refer back to the helpful/unhelpful thought table on p.7).