

# Relationships, Day 1: Self-Esteem

Special Education: Secondary, Lesson #3

## Student Learning Objectives:

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To be able to...

1. Identify ways in which they “belong”
2. Identify ways in which they “can do things”
3. Identify ways they know they are “appreciated”
4. Identify one thing they like about themselves
5. Identify an appropriate response to a compliment

## Materials Needed:

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- Magazines, scissors, glue and poster paper for collages
- Photographs of some students
- Projector or SMART Board for showing Visuals, or posters or handouts of the “I Belong”, “I Can Do Things” and “People Appreciate Me” Visuals
- Hand mirror(s)
- One copy of the worksheet for each student

## Agenda:

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1. Define self-esteem
2. Explore the concept, “I belong”
3. Explore the concept, “I can do things”
4. Explore the concept, “People appreciate me”
5. Individual exercise: Self-portrait collage
6. Sharing collage with the group
7. *“I Like...” Worksheet*
8. Compliment circle
9. Mirror work
10. Hand out and discuss the *Trusted Adult* letter

This lesson was most recently edited June 6, 2013.  
Alternate formats available on request.

Self esteem, how we feel about ourselves, is a critical part of social skills and sexuality education. Building a strong, positive sense of “who we are” underlies the ability to relate in safe and healthy ways to other people. It is important to explore the components of self-esteem individually, and then to realize that positive self esteem is something we can work on and enhance.

Developing positive self-esteem doesn’t end with this lesson - it is an ongoing task and must be incorporated into all aspects of your teaching.

## Activities

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***Self-esteem means: “how you feel about yourself – this can be positive or negative, good or bad.”***

**For students whose verbal skills are more limited, use actual pictures (photos sent from home or photos you take at school) of groups they belong to (family, classroom, team, etc.)**

**Take a class photo for each student’s workbook. Ask students to point to themselves in the picture.**

**Have students respond to their name when called out in a group.**

### **1. Define Self-esteem.**

- A. Ask the class this question:  
*What do we mean when we talk about self-esteem?”*  
One answer: *“How we feel about ourselves.”*
- B. Discuss with the class that having lots of positive self-esteem, liking yourself a lot, helps with many aspects of life. People with high self-esteem tend to make healthier choices for themselves; they tend to make and keep friends more easily, and live happier lives. This whole unit, learning about ourselves, our bodies and our relationships will help students develop high self-esteem. But today we will look at self-esteem by itself as a concept.
- C. Explain that how we feel about ourselves changes every day and during the day. Like treasure in a treasure chest, positive self-esteem can fill it up and negative self-esteem can take it out. Some of this can be controlled by us, but some is determined by how other people treat us.

### **2. Explore the concept “I belong”.**

- A. Explain to the class that *“Everyone needs to feel that they belong. You feel this way when someone chooses you to be on their team. You feel this way when friends and family get together for a birthday party. You feel this way when everyone’s going somewhere and they say ‘aren’t you coming?’ You feel this way when you’re home sick and someone calls just to see if you’re OK. You feel this way when someone invites you to be in their club”.*
- B. Show the “I Belong” Visual (on a screen, or enlarged to make a poster, or as a handout). Discuss the pictures with the class and have them talk about ways in which the people in the picture seem to “belong” to the group (part of a family gathering for a meal, members of a team, part of a group of friends).

**Have students express nonverbally how they feel about being part of that group - about “belonging”. (smiles, facial expressions, hand on a friend’s shoulder)**

**Take pictures of students doing things well, or find pictures of other people doing similar tasks.**

**Ask students to express non-verbally how they feel when they do something well. Smiling, showing pride through facial expressions or body language, sitting up a little taller - all are ways we express how we feel when we “can do things”.**

- C. Ask students to describe situations in their lives that make them feel like they “belong”. All students should be able to describe at least two circumstances - their class, and their living situation. Prompt students to come up with other examples of times when they have felt they “belonged”. (birthday parties, friends gathering, riding somewhere on the bus, Special Olympics events, People First meetings, special class events - dances, team sports, etc) Feeling like you belong gives you positive self-esteem.
  - D. Ask students to describe how it feels to “belong”. (good, happy, smile, proud, pleased to be included)
  - E. Ask for examples of when students felt they did NOT belong. Being rejected takes away from self esteem. Some students may have experienced rejection within groups, or may not have been made to feel like the group they belonged to was one to be proud of: Anger or sadness may need to be expressed.
  - F. End this section with a discussion of how we can help others feel welcome in groups, and how we can help others to feel that they too, belong.
- 3. Explore the concept “I can do things”.**
- A. Explain to the class that everyone needs to feel like they can do things. Jimmy is only three years old he feels this way when he puts his clothes on all by himself. Katy is seven; she feels this way when she rides her bike by herself for the first time. Damien is in a wheel chair; he feels this way with his new electric wheelchair that allows him to go places without being pushed by others!
  - B. Show the “I Can Do Things” Visual (on a screen, or enlarged to make a poster, or as a handout). Discuss the pictures with the class and have them talk about how the people in the pictures feel about the things they can do. **Optional Activity:** Copy this Visual and use as a worksheet. Ask students to circle the things they can do.
  - C. Have students think of things they can do and share them with the class. Try to encourage each student to share at least one thing they can do - even if it’s as simple as “smiling on

Monday morning”.

- D. Ask them to describe how it feels to “be able to do things”. (proud of yourself, happy, want to show off your accomplishment, pleased)
- E. Ask them to describe how it feels to “be able to do things.” Being able to do things adds positive self-esteem. Not being able to do things often takes away self-esteem.
- F. End this section with a discussion of how we can help others feel good about their accomplishments and that we can all “do things”.

**The concept of “appreciation” is complex - a simpler substitute is the concept “people like what you do”.**

**Use the photographs from step 3 “I can do things”. Show the pictures to the students, and then show appreciation for what they did in the picture - either a pat on the back, a handshake, perhaps a verbal “good job”, a sticker award or some other appropriate gesture of appreciation for a good job well done.**

**Ask students to express non-verbally how they feel when they are appreciated - again, it may be a smile, or a feeling of satisfaction shown through facial expressions.**

**4. Explore the concept “People appreciate me”.**

- A. Explain to the class that “People need to feel appreciated. Mary is doing her chores when the phone rings. She asks her little brother, Jack to answer the phone. He answers it and takes a message for Mary. She says, ‘Thanks, kid!’ and Jack feels appreciated. When her mother comes home, she sees that Mary has straightened up and she says, ‘The house looks great, honey!’ Mary feels appreciated. Mary’s Mom opens a shopping bag and shows Mary the cookies Mary’s been asking for. Mary grins. ‘You remembered,’ she says, hugging her mother. Her mother feels appreciated.”
- B. Show the “People Appreciate Me” Visual (on a screen, or enlarged to make a poster, or as a handout). Discuss the pictures with the class and have them talk about ways in which the people in the pictures show appreciation for one another.
- C. Have students think of times when they have felt appreciated and share them with the class. Situations might be from home (being thanked for doing the laundry, or the dishes) or from school (being acknowledged for helping with classroom equipment or clean-up, or just doing a good job on schoolwork).
- D. Discuss different ways that people show that they appreciate what you’ve done. They may thank you verbally, or give you some money (a paycheck). They might also shake your hand, give you a “high five” or even an award.
- E. Ask them to describe how it feels to “be appreciated” and not appreciated. Being appreciated adds to self esteem, not being

**For some students, you may want to teach each of the three concepts as an individual lesson, then summarize as a fourth lesson on this subject.**

**Work individually with students, having them point to pictures in magazines of things they like. Cut out the pictures and glue them onto poster paper with the student.**

**Have students hold up their collage for the group to see. Applause!**

- appreciated takes away from self-esteem.
- F. End this section with a discussion of how we can help others feel appreciated. A large group “High Five” for a good job well done in this class might be in order!
- G. Summarize this part of the lesson. Ask students to name the three parts of self-esteem we’ve talked about today (I belong, I can do things, People appreciate me).
- Point out the fact that we have some control over what happens in these three areas.**
1. We can join groups, so we belong, and work to include others.
  2. We can work on skills so that we have a feeling of accomplishment and can say with pride, “I can do things”.
  3. We can show appreciation for what others do - then they will likely return the favor and show appreciation for us in ways that are meaningful.

**5. Individual exercise: Self portrait collage.**

- A. Distribute supplies to individual students or small groups of students. (available magazines, scissors, glue and heavy poster paper - one sheet per student) Provide a variety of types of magazines (activity, clothing, multi-ethnic).
- B. Have students cut out pictures of things they like about themselves or others and paste them onto a piece of poster paper to create an “I Like” collage. Put names on the back of collages, or have students write or work their names into the collage in some way.
- C. Collages can be an ongoing project. Leave materials available so that collages can develop as time goes on. This allows you to set a time limit of 5 to 15 minutes for this activity during today’s lesson.
- D. Finished collages can be laminated with clear contact paper, posted in the classroom, or taken home.

**6. Sharing collage with the group.**

- A. Being asked your opinion is an important part of developing self-confidence and positive self-esteem.  
Remind students that our choices and

**For some students it may be more helpful to work one-to-one on this exercise with specially prepared materials. Collect the following a) a menu with pictures of food items, b) magazine pictures of three different recreation activities (example: watching TV, riding a bike, playing cards) and c) a clothing catalogue page with three or more choices of items (example: 3 different colors of shirts)**

**Have students point to their preference in each case, to finish the sentence “I like . . .**

**A compliment is: “saying something nice about someone else”**

preferences belong to us and are a part of our identity. Therefore, everyone’s choices about things they like will be different, just as each student is different.

- B. Have students hold up their collages for the rest of the class to see. Ask the student to comment on their favorite part of the collage. The rest of the class applauds.

### **7. Worksheet: “I like...”**

- A. Start by explaining that in order to like ourselves, we need to think about other things that we like, too. This exercise in completing sentences uses starter statements about things “I like...”, and asks students to complete the thought.
- B. It may be used in two ways:
- as a discussion tool, going around the room and having each student complete the same statement, or
  - as a homework assignment.

You may find that you want to complete two or three of the statements in class and then have students finish up at home with trusted adults.

- C. To use as a discussion tool, pass out copies of the worksheet and model an appropriate response. Remind students of the rule that says that students may “pass” in this class. Then ask each student in turn to complete the sentence with his or her own preference. Point out that our choices are all “correct” (there are no wrong answers), and that our choices belong to us. What we like is part of who we are, part of our identity.

### **8. Compliment Circle**

- A. This exercise allows students to practice giving and receiving compliments. Define the word compliment for your students. *“When you pay someone a compliment you give them a word gift. Saying something positive about someone, whether it’s about something they did or who they are, is a nice thing to do. Compliments help to make people feel good about themselves. Compliments should be honest – you should*

**An appropriate nonverbal response to a sincere compliment might be a simple nod.**

*really mean what you say.*”

- B. Remind the group again of the class rule “No Put-downs.”
- C. Model giving and receiving a compliment. Be specific and honest in the compliment, using the person’s name. The response should be a simple and gracious “Thank You”, or “Thanks, I like it too.” example:  
“Joanne, I really like your new blouse. The color is pretty with your hair.” “Thanks”.
- D. Ask students to sit in a circle. One at a time students turn to their left and pay the student sitting next to them a compliment, saying one thing they like about that person.
- E. The student receiving the compliment responds appropriately. Remind students that all they have to say is a simple “Thank You”. Important Note: This exercise may make people feel uncomfortable, and participation should be optional.

**9. Mirror work.**

- A. Modify the compliment circle exercise by passing a hand mirror around the circle and asking that students say one thing they like about the person in the mirror.
- B. A large group round of applause for everyone is a nice way to close this lesson.

**10. Hand out and discuss the *Trusted Adult* letter.**

# Dear Trusted Adult,

In class we learned about self-esteem.

We talked about three important aspects of self-esteem;

- the need to feel that “I belong”,
- the need to feel that “I can do things”, and
- the need to feel that “people appreciate me”

You can continue to foster self-esteem and reinforce this part of learning by:

- including them in some activity (to give them a sense of belonging and give the gift of “belonging” to someone else)
- helping them to find peers with whom to socialize (and build a sense of belonging)
- complimenting them on some skill (to give them a sense of being able to do things),
- thanking them for something they have done well (so they feel appreciated).
- discuss how you felt when you were their age. Did you feel popular? Did that change with time?
- model “thank-you’s” for chores and other “responsibilities”. Be specific in your compliments - not just “That’s great!” but even better, “Thanks for making your bed. Your bedspread is so straight and I don’t even have to pick up your pillow. I appreciate it!”
- encourage them to notice and comment when someone else does something well (e.g. “This dinner is delicious, Dad. I really like the spices in the chili.”)
- Another exercise you can do to support this lesson is to discuss how students would complete the following sentences:
  1. One way I make other people feel good is \_\_\_\_\_.
  2. One thing I can do is \_\_\_\_\_.
  3. One person who likes me is \_\_\_\_\_.

Repeat the exercise, but this time, you, a trusted adult will complete the sentences.

If you have any questions or comments, please call me.

Sincerely,

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Teacher, Principal or Nurse

**NOTE: All Trusted Adult Exercises are Optional.**



# **“I Like...” Worksheet**

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- 1. One thing I like to do is ...**
  
- 2. One thing I really like to eat is ...**
  
- 3. One TV show I really like to watch is ...**
  
- 4. My favorite color is ...**
  
- 5. One thing I really like about my class is ...**
  
- 6. One thing I really like about my teacher is ...**
  
- 7. One thing I really like about going to school is ...**

# "I Belong"

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# "I Can Do Things"

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# **“People Appreciate Me”**

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