

Materials:

- Art paper and supplies (colored pencils, crayons, water colors)
- Writing paper and pencils

Background For Teachers:

Self-concept and self-esteem:

Self-concept is the view you have of yourself. It is basically how you see yourself as the unique person you are. People who recognize their strengths and qualities generally have a positive self-concept.

Some people tend to focus on their weaknesses rather than on their strengths. They may see themselves as too short, too tall, too slow, or too something else. People who focus more often on their weaknesses can develop a negative self-concept. A positive self-concept is an important part of good mental and emotional health.

Your **self-esteem** is the way you feel about yourself, or how you value yourself. It is closely related to your self-concept. If you have high self-esteem, you are more likely to try hard and succeed. This success, in turn, reinforces your self-esteem and leads you to make efforts in new areas.

Often, a negative self-concept leads to low self-esteem. For example, if you aren't chosen for the track team after practicing for months, you might look upon yourself as a failure, even though you excel in other activities. This unrealistic picture of yourself could negatively affect your self-esteem.

Even someone who is physically healthy can get a cold, or some other illness, now and then. In the same way, your mental and emotional health is also likely to go through its own ups and downs. Fortunately, you can learn to improve your self-esteem and your overall level of mental and emotional health. Some of the ways a person can **improve self-esteem** include:

1. **Motivate yourself.** Set healthy, realistic goals and working to achieve them. Motivation helps you focus on your goals.
2. **Focus on your strengths.** See yourself in a more positive way. Start by making a list of all your strengths and successes. Perhaps you are good at a sport or being a true friend. Working to improve your talents and abilities can also improve your self-esteem.
3. **Understand and manage your feelings.** Managing your feelings is another important part of your mental and emotional health. For example, suppose that you find yourself losing your temper with friends for no apparent reason. You may realize that you are nervous because you have a track meet coming up. Recognizing the cause of your anxiety will help you manage your interactions with friends.
4. **Develop a positive attitude.** Your thoughts and behavior have a strong influence on your mental and emotional health. If you believe that you cannot handle new situations, your mental and emotional health will suffer. If, on the other hand, you see challenges as obstacles that you can overcome, your mental health will be affected in a positive way.
5. **Learn from your mistakes.** You can also improve your self-esteem by learning from your mistakes. This means that you take responsibility for your actions and recognize when you are wrong. It also means that you see mistakes as opportunities to grow and improve.

Instructional Procedures:

Days 1 and 2

Begin a discussion on self-esteem and self-concept. Ask students to think about the following questions:

1. How do you feel when you think about the kind of person you are?
2. Do you like and respect yourself?
3. Do you accept yourself for who you are?
4. Do you have confidence to try new things even though you might fail?

On a piece of scratch paper, have the students brainstorm their strengths and the positive qualities that make them unique. Make sure they include adjectives such as honest, kind, fair, hardworking and so on. Ask students to list at least 10 strengths and qualities.

Hand out art paper and supplies. Instruct the students to draw a picture of themselves in the center of the paper. Around the outside, have them draw and write 6 of the 10 qualities they brainstormed. They should NOT write their names on these projects. Allow students a full class period or more to complete these projects. Remind them that neatness counts. Hang the completed pictures in the hallway or around the classroom and allow students to guess who each paper belongs to based on that person's strengths.