

Confidence and Self-esteem

What is it?

Self-confidence is when we trust in our own abilities, qualities and judgement. People with self-confidence tend to have the courage to embrace new situations that, in time, leads to a sense of confidence. Self-esteem is how we see ourselves and our worth. Feelings around our self-esteem begin to develop in early childhood. The judgement is internal and can be difficult to change if we see ourselves in a certain way. **Self-confidence** is how you feel about your abilities and can vary from situation to situation. **Self-esteem** refers to how you feel about yourself overall; how much esteem, positive regard or self-love you have.

What can cause low self-esteem?

What affects an individual's self-esteem differs from person to person. Some people may suddenly develop low self-esteem, whilst for others it may happen slowly over a longer period of time. There are many events and experiences that could have an effect on a child or young person's (CYP) self-esteem. These include: bullying; exams/school attainment; ongoing stress; peer pressure; worries about appearance or body image; changes in relationships; mental health problems; and money problems.

Signs and Symptoms

A lack of confidence and self-esteem difficulties can affect us in different ways. There are various signs and behaviours that you may pick up on that could point to a CYP struggling with their confidence and self-esteem. These include:

- Having a negative image of themselves
- Being preoccupied with personal problems
- Overly fixating on their appearance
- Being sensitive to criticism – e.g. getting upset
- Putting themselves down
- Minimising accomplishments & magnifying mistakes
- Finding change difficult
- Avoiding new and unfamiliar things
- Not dealing well with failure
- Self-harm
- Physical symptoms such as headaches, difficulty sleeping and tiredness
- Slouching/avoiding eye contact
- Being hostile
- Withdrawing socially
- Comparing themselves to their peers negatively
- Finding friendships difficult - both making and keeping friendships
- Quickly backing down in conversations

Feelings

A CYP with low confidence and low self-esteem may feel:

- Worthless, stupid, bad and ugly
- Unlikeable and unlovable
- Awkward
- Incompetent
- Isolated and lonely
- That they aren't as good as others
- Victimised by others
- That mistakes they make are magnified
- That they don't like themselves
- Unable to make decisions or to assert themselves
- That they don't deserve to be happy

Suggestions for Schools

Key adult/emotionally available adult

Help the CYP to feel supported and cared for by arranging regular 'check ins' with a key adult that they feel comfortable talking to and who has the time to offer support. Checking in regularly will help the CYP to feel supported by the emotionally available adult and it will also give the key worker the opportunity to monitor how the CYP is doing and to support accordingly. Support the CYP to identify strategies such as finding someone to speak to, journaling, exercising, listening to music, engaging in activities they enjoy.

Refer CYP for extra support

Refer to interventions you may have in place in your school (e.g. ELSA) that can support the CYP to identify their feelings and provide coping skills for their changing feelings or life circumstances. You can also refer to counselling or third sector agencies if appropriate. Speak to the CYP and pastoral staff before making a referral as it may not be needed. Referrals into child and adolescent health services (via GP) are typically appropriate when first line school interventions have been tried but things haven't improved and symptoms are impacting on the CYP's day to day functioning.

Ideas to support and boost self-confidence

Some ideas to support and boost a CYP's confidence are to help them:

- **Challenge negative self-talk.** Help to identify negative self-talk and replace with positive statements.
- **Spend time with people who love and support them.** Help them to spend time with people who lift them up, compliment and encourage them.
- **Focus on their positives.** Help to remind themselves of their strengths, achievements and the compliments they've received.
- **Accomplish something.** Support them to set realistic and achievable goals (it helps if it's something they enjoy) and visualise success before they begin. If you can see it, you can believe it!
- **Be kind to themselves.** Encourage CYP to speak to themselves in same way that they would speak to a friend in a similar situation.
- **Know it's ok to say 'no'.** People with low self-esteem often feel that they can't say 'no'. Normally saying 'no' will not upset a relationship and saying 'yes' all of the time can make us feel angry and resentful.

- **Accept mistakes and learn from them.** We all need to know what doesn't work and what does work. Know that good enough is good enough, there is no such thing as perfect!

Suggestions adapted from Emotional Wellbeing Service (link below).

Useful websites / Resources

<https://positivepsychology.com/self-esteem-worksheets/>

<https://www.twinkl.co.uk/resources/keystage2-ks2-pastoral-support-and-well-being/keystage2-ks2-pastoral-support-and-well-being-student-pastoral-support/keystage2-ks2-pastoral-support-and-well-being-student-pastoral-support-self-esteem>

<https://www.dove.com/uk/dove-self-esteem-project/school-workshops-on-body-image-confident-me.html>

<https://www.childline.org.uk/info-advice/your-feelings/feelings-emotions/building-confidence-self-esteem/>

<https://www.dewis.wales/confidence-cyp>

<http://www.stepiau.org/low-self-esteem>

<https://youngminds.org.uk/find-help/for-parents/parents-guide-to-support-a-z/parents-guide-to-support-self-esteem/>

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/raising-low-self-esteem/>

<https://emotionalwellbeingservice.org.uk/>

Emotional Wellbeing Service for Cardiff and the Vale - Contact directly for the Confidence and Self-esteem booklet)

This document is available in Welsh / Mae'r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg

