

Key Words

- assertion
- confidence
- creativity
- decisions
- eye contact
- leadership
- listening
- outcomes
- resentment
- respect
- self-esteem
- values

Questions for Discussion

1. Define self-esteem.

Self-esteem is the way an individual feels about him/herself.

2. How can you develop positive self-esteem?

There are many things you can do to improve your self-esteem. Listen for the negative voice inside your head, the voice that tells you, "you can't." This little voice prevents you from having self-confidence. Every time you hear this voice ask yourself why you are being so negative. Then turn the situation around; tell the little voice all of the reasons "you can." This will allow you to approach the same situations with greater self-esteem.

3. How can you contribute to the development of positive self-esteem in a friend?

You can contribute to the development of positive self-esteem in another by demonstrating interest in what that person has to say. Letting him/her know that you care will also contribute to a positive self-image. You can also enhance the self-esteem of another by reinforcing their positive attributes.

4. Explain how individuals with low self-esteem sometimes set themselves up to fail.

Individuals with low self-esteem do not expect to do well. They sometimes avoid trying to accomplish things because they are sure they will fail; they do not give themselves a chance to experience success and as a result, their self-esteem remains low.

5. In the video, one of the experts suggests that shy people sometimes have the most to contribute. What does she mean by this?

Many people are shy in some situations and outgoing in others. Often, shy people are the best listeners and the best thinkers. It is worth bearing what they have to say.

6. Is it accurate to say that each person either has low self-esteem or high self-esteem?

It is normal for most people to experience high self-esteem on some days and lower self-esteem on others. It is important to remember that there are many things we can do to improve our own self-esteem as well as that of others.

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7. A friend would like to share a story or personal thoughts with you. How might you let this friend know that you are listening to what is being said? How will your friend feel, having your undivided attention?

There are many ways you can let your friend know that you are listening. Maintaining eye contact, demonstrating attentive body language such as nodding, and resisting the temptation to interrupt, all let your friend know that he/she has your undivided attention. Your friend will see that you value what he/she has to say.

8. What is depression?

Depression is sadness that lasts a long, long time. An individual who is depressed often has very low self-esteem and worries that life will never get any better. Teens who experience sadness for a long period of time should speak with their parents, teacher, counselor or doctor. Depression can be treated.

Questions for Further Thought

1. Who are the people in your life that have an affect on your self-esteem?

2. Imagine that you are a parent. What kinds of things would you do to help develop a positive self-esteem in your child? When would you start taking these measures?

Answers will vary. Guide teens in understanding that demonstrating respect for and listening to children from a very early age will help children to grow confident in themselves.

3. Are your parents responsible for your level of self-esteem?

Parents contribute greatly to the self-esteem of their children; however, it is impossible to list everyone who has had an influence on the way you feel about yourself. It is important for you to recognize that you are capable of improving your self-esteem.

4. Are you the only teen who worries about how you appear to others? Explain.

You are certainly not the only teen who worries about how you appear to others. Many teens feel that their every imperfection is noticed by others.

5. If most teens are worried about their own imperfections, why then, do they tease one another?

Teens often tease others in order to remove negative attention from themselves; they hope that if they point out the imperfections of someone else, nobody will notice theirs.

6. Do you think people with high self-esteem are arrogant, obnoxious or stuck-up? Explain.

7. Explain why a teen with low self-esteem might be easily influenced by peer pressure.

8. One of the teens interviewed believes that racism and prejudice are the result of low self-esteem and people not listening to one another. What does he mean by this?

Extended Activities

Listening attentively to what another is saying is a great way to learn and boost the speaker's self-esteem at the same time. Listening, however, is often very difficult. We have many subconscious thoughts which prevent us from staying focused on what a speaker is saying. Examples of such thoughts are: "How do I look today?", "Am I being a good listener?", "I want to talk.", "She sounds so smart. I wonder if I ever sound that intelligent." Becoming a good listener takes a great deal of practice.

ACTIVITY #1

The following activity is designed to make students more conscious of the effort required to actually listen well. It should also increase their awareness of how they make others feel when they do not listen attentively. (This may also be a good time to teach the importance of eye contact and body language in effective communication.)

- a. Assign each student a partner who is not a close friend.
- b. Partners will take turns talking for two or three minutes about something that is important, but not deeply personal.
- c. Each time the listener has a thought that prevents him/her from truly listening to what the speaker is saying, he/she should hold a piece of paper up between their two faces.
- d. After all students have had the opportunity to play the role of speaker and listener, ask them to discuss their feelings: How did it feel to know that you were not being listened to? How did it feel to realize that you were not listening well?

ACTIVITY #2

This is an exercise of a personal nature that is not meant to be shared with others. It is designed to make individuals aware of their own negative self-talk and give them strategies to deal with it in a positive manner.

- a. Think of something personal you wish to accomplish but seriously doubt your ability to do (e.g. making the football team).
- b. Write down all the reasons you have for thinking that you might not attain this goal (e.g. I'm too small, everyone else is better than I am).
- c. For each negative thought, write at least one positive thing that could enable you to reach your goal (e.g. I could work out and get stronger, I could practice harder, I'm sure the coach will give me some pointers).

ACTIVITY #3

This activity is designed to help students think of positive ways to resolve conflicts involving others. You may wish to introduce the activity by asking the following questions:

1. Why are individuals with low self-esteem more likely to argue with others?

Individuals with low self-esteem often tease others in order to remove negative attention from themselves. They are more likely to believe that if two people have a disagreement about an issue, one person must "lose" in order for the other to "win."

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2. Why are individuals with high-self esteem less likely to argue with others?

Individuals with high self-esteem are usually not bothered when a disagreement is resolved in a way which allows both parties to "win." They are much more willing to compromise.

3. Are there ways of resolving conflicts which will allow both individuals to "win"? Answers may vary.

Present students with this conflict involving friends: Tom and Carl are best friends. Each has \$1,200 and both want to buy a car. They decide to pool their money so they can buy a car they both like. Both Tom and Carl have big dates on Friday night and each insists on using the car.

a. Come up with as many "win-win" solutions as possible. How do these solutions affect their relationship? How might each of them feel?

b. Come up with as many "win-lose" solutions as possible. How do these solutions affect their relationship? How might each of them feel?

c. Have students think of other conflicts to find "win-win" and "win-lose" solutions. (This may be done on paper, through discussion or in the form of role plays.)

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SELF-ESTEEM

Grades 7-12

Themes

1. Many factors affect how individuals feel about themselves.
2. Individuals can take steps to develop more positive self-esteem.
3. Individuals have the ability to improve the self-esteem of others.
4. Self-esteem will determine the types of things individuals will do in their lives.

IN COOPERATION WITH:

THE CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL OF PHILADELPHIA
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