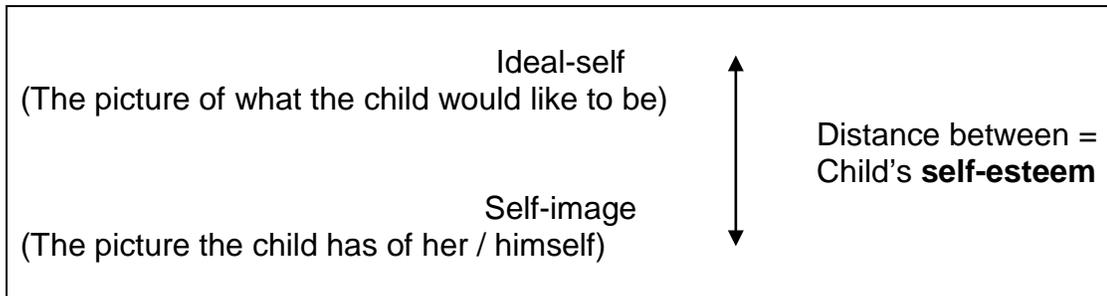


SELF-ESTEEM

Self-esteem is the picture children build of themselves through evaluating the reactions of others. 'What I think of myself depends on what I think you think of me' (Cooley, 1962). The distance between a child's ideal-self and their self-image determines their self-esteem – a larger distance indicates lower self-esteem.



Children with high self-esteem have confidence, display good attention skills and are willing to learn. Low self-esteem can cause children to feel depressed and can take the form of aggression, avoidance, helplessness or refusal. Children with physical disabilities can find it difficult to have high self-esteem - they rate themselves against their peers and feel inadequate, often their environment and curriculum are not devised with their abilities in mind, so they are at a disadvantage.

STRATEGIES TO HELP IMPROVE SELF-ESTEEM

All children need to be accepted, feel cared about and included in their class. The development of high self-esteem in children with physical disabilities complements good practice for all children.

Adults can support children by:

- Accepting mistakes then suggesting another way of completing a task
- Aiming to show children's strengths through what adults ask them to do
- Appreciating what it's like to be in their shoes
- Developing independence and supporting self-help skills
- Encouraging self-evaluation, so children can measure their own achievements
- Giving choices and opportunities for children to problem solve
- Linking closely with parents / carers to celebrate success
- Modelling the way they want others to treat the child
- Noticing and rewarding effort and risk rather than just success
- Setting tasks which present a realistic challenge
- Treating children as individuals, e.g. discussing their interests
- Valuing children for themselves, rather than their achievements

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ACTIVITIES TO IMPROVE SELF-ESTEEM

'**I CAN...**' booklets or boxes are an excellent way to enable a child to display their achievements. The booklet or box could include drawings, pictures, photographs or written work, which celebrates a child's successes.

'**I Can...**' / '**I Will...**' **Trees** are constructed using differently coloured leaves. Each child identifies something they can do and completes a green leaf by stating 'I can...' Next the children choose a differently coloured leaf and state 'I will...' The tree should be displayed within the classroom.

An '**Interest table**' could display objects brought into school, which are associated with achievement, e.g. football boots, swimming badge, tutu. Children could be encouraged to share their 'treasure' with their classmates, i.e. demonstrating or talking about their particular item.

'**Positive Consequences**' is a game that can be played in small groups of three to six children. The first child is asked to say or write down a word, which indicates a positive attribute of one of their peers. Children take it in turns to 'build up' their classmates.

'**Silhouettes**' - a lamp is used to create a shadow of a child's head in profile, this is drawn around and cut out on black paper. The profile is then stuck onto a larger piece of light coloured paper. The positive qualities suggested by other children are written around the face, making a permanent record to display and build the child's self-image.

A '**Success lifeline**' displays the child's achievements from birth to the present day and highlights all of their positive achievements, e.g. personal and social development or learning new skills.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Class teachers can get advice from the School **SENDCO** who will be able to consult with to the school link **Educational Psychologist** or **CAMHS**, if necessary.

The **Diana Children's Community Service** CAFSS help children, young people and their families to understand their thoughts and feelings about how they are being affected by a life limiting, life threatening or chronic illness.

MindEd is a free educational resource on children and young people's mental health for all adults. <http://www.minded.org.uk/>

Place2Be resources include Fink Cards '*Conversations about mental health*' provides teachers with a simple tool that encourages pupils to have discussions about mental health and emotional wellbeing. <https://www.place2be.org.uk>

Young Minds is the UK's leading charity championing the wellbeing and mental health of young people. <https://youngminds.org.uk/> website includes HeadMeds.

REFERENCES

Quality Circle Time in the Primary Classroom: Your Essential Guide to Enhancing Self-esteem, Self-discipline and Positive Relationships (1996) by Jenny Mosley

Quality Circle Time in the Secondary Classroom (2013) by Jenny Mosley's classic text provides a rationale, framework and whole-school model for quality circle time specifically for secondary schools and further education colleges.

Child and Adolescent Mental Health: Theory and Practice (2012) by Christine Hooper, Margaret Thompson, Catherine Laver-Bradbury, Chris Gale.

An Introduction to Child and Adolescent Mental Health (2014) by Maddie Burton, Erica Pavord, Briony Williams.

Talking about emotional wellbeing in school (2013) is a product from the BOND consortium. BOND (Better Outcomes New Delivery)

NOTES

Children and young people may experience a wide range of social and emotional difficulties which manifest themselves in many ways. These may include becoming withdrawn or isolated, as well as displaying challenging, disruptive or disturbing behaviour. SEND COP 2014

Mental health includes: a positive sense of well-being; individual resources including self-esteem, optimism, a sense of mastery and coherence; the ability to initiate, develop and sustain mutually satisfying personal relationships and the ability to cope with adversities.

Mental health is more than an absence of symptoms of mental illness or distress. Mental Health refers to a positive sense of well-being and a belief in our own worth and the dignity and worth of others. Count Us In, 2002

Mental health is emotional and spiritual resilience which enables us to enjoy life and survive pain, disappointment and sadness. It is a positive sense of well-being and an underlying belief in our own and others worth.

World Mental Health Day Campaign, 2010

Children with disabilities

Few methodologically sound studies are available that describe the prevalence of mental illness among disabled children. Those that do exist suggest that children and

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adolescents with disabilities are at significantly increased risk of mental health problems compared with their peers (Dykens, 2000).

Studies from different countries suggest that the proportion of mental illness for disabled children is significant but can vary:

Australia: 40% (Einfeld & Tonge, 1996)
Scotland: 38% (Hoare et al, 1998)
England: 50% (Cormack et al, 2000)
South Africa: 31% (Molteno et al, 2001)
UK: 39% (Emerson, 2003)
Scotland: 40.9% (Cooper et al, 2007)

Mental health is emotional and spiritual resilience which enables us to enjoy life and survive pain, disappointment and sadness. It is a positive sense of well-being and an underlying belief in our own and others worth (World Mental Health Day Campaign, 2010). Few methodologically sound studies are available that describe the prevalence of mental illness among disabled children. Those that do exist suggest that children and adolescents with disabilities are at significantly increased risk of mental health problems compared with their peers (Dykens, 2000). Studies from different countries suggest that the proportion of mental illness for disabled children is significant but can vary, England: 50% (Cormack et al, 2000).

Self-esteem is the opinion we have of ourselves. When we have healthy self-esteem, we tend to feel positive about ourselves and about life in general. It makes us able to deal with life's ups and downs better. When our self-esteem is low, we tend to see ourselves and our life in a more negative and critical light. We also feel less able to take on the challenges life throws at us. (NHS)