

Parent/Carer Self Esteem and Body Image Toolkit

A resource for parents & carers to help support their child or young person to understand and manage self-esteem and body image.

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About this toolkit

Developing healthy self-esteem is important for children and young people. Self-esteem depends on the internal ability to feel good about ourselves.

Young people can often feel dissatisfied about their appearance. It can be anything from the girl who lacks confidence to put her hand up in class, to the boy who feels unable to speak out against those who bully him because of his appearance, this is an issue associated with damaging consequences for young peoples health and wellbeing. Low confidence can have a crippling effect on everyday life, this is when they may need some help.

Self-esteem directly effects the self-worth of a young person. A young persons self-esteem is measured by how they feel about themselves and what they are worth. Self-esteem is also about how much others value them. While perceived value in the eyes of others may not always be accurate, this idea also contributes to each persons self-esteem.

There are a variety of external and internal influences that can dictate the way a teen feels about themselves:

- Body Type
- Height
- Weight
- Hair Style/Colour
- Identity
- Social position
- Media
- Family and school environment

While these factors are often beyond control of the young person, they are nonetheless a part of their self-esteem development. This toolkit will help you to understand this topic and how you can help and support your child to manage their self esteem and body confidence.

The problem isn't
with your body.
the problem is
what you think
of it...
And what you think
of yourself.

Children and young people with high self-esteem often:

- Have a positive image of themselves
- Are confident
- Can make friends easily and are not anxious with new people
- Can play in groups or on their own
- Will try and solve problems on their own, but if not able to will ask for help
- Can be proud of their achievements
- Can admit mistakes and learn from them
- Will try new things and adapt to change.

Children and young people with low self-esteem often:

- Have a negative image of themselves, they might feel bad, ugly, unlikeable or stupid
- Lack confidence
- Find it hard to make and keep friendships, and may feel victimised by others
- Feel lonely and isolated
- Tend to avoid new things and find change hard
- Can't deal well with failure.
- Tend to put themselves down and might say things like "I'm stupid" or "I can't do that"
- Are not proud of what they achieve and always think they could have done better.
- Are constantly comparing themselves to their peers in a negative way

There are a number of activities in the resource section that can be completed individually and/or together with your child that will help them to build positive self esteem.

If you are worried your child's low self-esteem is affecting their day to day life, relationships or ability to learn and develop, it is worth seeking professional help. You can talk to your GP, and you can go without them if they would rather not come along with you. It can be helpful to write down what makes you think your child has low self-esteem, and anything you think might be causing it.

Talk to your child's school to see if they offer any mentoring or buddying schemes that your child might find useful.

What is self esteem?

Self-esteem is how we value and perceive ourselves. It's based on our opinions and beliefs about ourselves, which can sometimes feel really difficult to change.

Your self-esteem can affect whether you:

- like and value yourself as a person
- believe you matter and are good enough
- are able to make decisions and assert yourself
- recognise your strengths and positives
- feel able to try new or difficult things
- believe you deserve happiness
- show kindness towards yourself
- move past mistakes without blaming yourself unfairly

"For me, building self-esteem was [about] learning what self-esteem was in the first place. It was unlearning what I had learned about myself ... I went back to self-school and learned all about me."

What is body image?

Body image is how we think and feel about ourselves physically, and how we believe others see us. It involves how a person sees themselves, compared to the standards that have been set by society. During adolescence and puberty, young people's brain and body go through huge changes. The body releases hormones which make you more aware of how you look, and more aware of other people's bodies. These changes happen to everyone, and can sometimes make you feel out of control or anxious.

Childhood and teen body image is shaped by many factors. Therefore, body image influences come from:

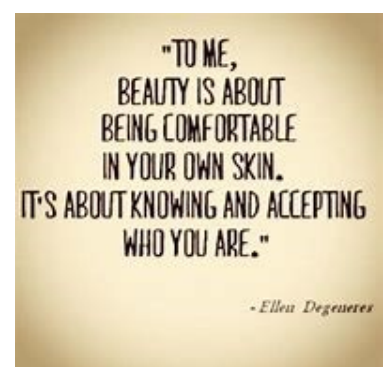
Peers

Parents and family members

The media and social media

Celebrity images

Cultural norms



How body image affects mental health

Being body positive can support mental and physical health by boosting confidence and helping children to develop a healthy image of themselves. Not measuring their worth based on how they look can boost overall wellbeing, and means children are more likely to think about being healthy and fit, rather than being a certain body size.

A **negative body image** or body dissatisfaction can lead to a child having:

- low self-esteem
- low confidence
- anxiety
- depression
- poor self-perception.

It can also affect a child's:

- learning
- quality of life
- participation in school
- achievement in school
- eating habits – this may lead to unhealthy eating patterns, which could put the child at risk of developing eating disorders.

To help your child boost to identify their positive traits use the '5 things I like about myself' and the 'Namebow' activity in the resource section

Spotting the signs

Here are some signs to look out for – this includes children:

- feeling overly worried about how they look
- wanting to cover up parts of their body because they feel self-conscious
- not wanting to change or take part in physical education (PE)
- being bullied for the way they look – or children making negative comments
- equating “fat” with “bad”
- refusing types of food because “it makes me fat”.

Tips for Parents of Teens with Negative Body Image

While young people are inevitably responsible for their own body image, parents can help their children to discover their beauty and self worth.

Be a Good Role Model

One of the best ways for you to impact your child's self-esteem is to be a positive role model for them, they will notice. Your child is carefully examining your own eating habits, lifestyle choices, and your attitudes about your own body. Pay attention to the example you are setting, ensure that this example is a healthy one. If a parent is constantly criticizing the changes to their own body, the teen will determine that the focus should be on the flaws. Exemplify a positive body image, make healthy changes when you are unhappy with your own body, and direct your teen to setting realistic goals.

Be Positive

Speak constructively, rather than critically. Encourage healthy habits such as good hygiene, good posture, healthy sleeping habits and stress relief.

Teach Realistic Expectations

The media is constantly vying for your child's attention. Media teaches your teen their definition of beauty. However, it is up to parents to teach young people to be sceptical of the images they see in magazines or on screen. Help your teen understand the 'tricks of the beauty industry' in order to understand why the photos they see are not always realistic or healthy.

Encourage Character

While the world often sees beauty as the end-all, it is important to instil good character, teach them that beauty comes from within and that a person of good character, integrity, honesty and truth is the most beautiful. Praise the good things they are doing including activities like sports, music, art, etc.

Invest in Health

Health is often forfeited in exchange for the media's definition of beauty. Instil healthy habits into your family. Choose healthy eating, sleeping and exercise habits for your teen and your whole family.

Here are some thing you can do that can really help:

1. Show your child lots of love and be positive about them as a person – tell them what makes them special to you.
2. Set an example of having a positive attitude when faced with challenges.
3. Let them know you value effort rather than perfection. Children can miss out on lots because they don't try, because they are too anxious about not 'succeeding'.
4. Encourage them to try new challenges, and celebrate them for it. Phrases like "Well done, that was hard, and you managed it," are good. Make the steps small at first, then increase the challenges.
5. Help them set goals and make plans for things they'd like to accomplish. Keeping track builds good feelings about each milestone achieved.
6. Let them know they should not to be afraid to voice their ideas and opinions. It's ok when people disagree, we all see things differently.
7. Give praise for their successes, and don't focus on areas where they have not done so well. Get into the habit of asking them about three good things that went well today.

Other ways parents can help their child build a stronger sense of self:

Have discussions with your child around the impact of social media, regularly celebrate the differences between us and suggest ways in which they can increase self-esteem because influences can happen without them being fully aware that it is happening as it becomes part of our everyday lives. Ask them to define what the following terms mean to them:

- Body Image
- Body Confidence
- Self-esteem

Definitions

Body Image

Body Image is how we experience our body. The way we perceive our self. How we think and feel about our body and what we THINK others see

Body Confidence

How satisfied we are with our appearance and body. One can have low and high body confidence. Someone with low body confidence is likely to be dissatisfied with the way they look.

Self Esteem

Self-Esteem is how we value ourselves: it is how we perceive our value to the world and how valuable we think we are to others

Social Media

It is easy to fall victim to self-esteem issues when you see those around posting the best version of themselves online. Begin a conversation with your child about whether or not social media has ever made them feel less confident as a person. If your child is feeling media induced self-doubt, here are some conversational topics in order to help them avoid these problems of uncertainty:

- Ask your child why they enjoy social media.
- Getting to the bottom of what aspects of media appeals to your kids is a good way to gauge why they follow who they follow and post what they post.
- Encourage your child to think about whether or not likes on a photo or post is valuable feedback.

As a child or young adult, it can be easy to get caught up in the whirlwind of social media. By encouraging your child to appreciate and absorb the positive reactions they are receiving in 'real life', and not just over a screen, you can hope to make them feel more confident about having a social media account and value the authenticity of real life interactions.



Resource Section

In this section you will find:

Useful Worksheets

Breathing Techniques

Mindfulness Activities

Online Support Links

Support Telephone Numbers

Help your child to practice the different ways of building self-esteem



Show RESPECT towards others and yourself.



Treat yourself with kindness & compassion, even & especially when life gets hard.



See MISTAKES AS AN OPPORTUNITY TO LEARN.



Remember That NO ONE IS PERFECT.



Don't compare yourself to what you see in the media.



Focus on the things you have control over & can change.



Choose friends who treat you how you want to be treated.



Create. Build. Cook. Bake. Garden. Do Art.

Do more of what helps you feel good about yourself.



Look in the mirror & tell yourself, "I love you."



BE YOUR OWN BEST FRIEND



Don't compare yourself with others. You are unique!



READ!

Make choices that stay true to what you value.

Learn & practice healthy ways to cope with stress.



Laugh! Play! Have Fun! Get silly!

Say positive affirmations.



FOCUS ON THE POSITIVES & BE OPTIMISTIC



FORGIVE OTHERS. FORGIVE YOURSELF.



Take slow, mindful breaths.

Eat healthy food.



exercise!

Practice daily hygiene.



TELL THE TRUTH & BE HONEST

Resolve conflict peacefully & use I-Statements.

ASK FOR HELP & SUPPORT

Set goals & work towards them, step by step.



HAVE A GROWTH MINDSET.



Remind yourself that your bravery is stronger than your fear.



Say what you want, need & hope for.

FOCUS ON SOLUTIONS, NOT PROBLEMS.



TALK ABOUT YOUR FEELINGS WITH SOMEONE YOU TRUST.

Try again when something doesn't work out the way you hoped it would.



Get enough sleep.

SAY: "THANK YOU" WHEN SOMEONE COMPLEMENTS YOU.



Be responsible for your choices at school & at home.

DRINK PLENTY OF WATER

Give yourself a hug.



Start a new hobby or sport. Join a club at school.

SPEND TIME WITH CARING ADULTS.



Limit how much time you spend in front of screens.

COMPLETE YOUR SCHOOL ASSIGNMENTS.



HELP OTHERS

50 Ways to Build SELF-ESTEEM for kids

This activity helps children to remember that body image is deeper than the external cosmetic things that social media and magazines promote. When they see their bodies for their function and worth it will create gratitude and awareness which allows for an discussion based on respect, ownership and love.

What my body does for me:

- 1 _____
- 2 _____
- 3 _____
- 4 _____
- 5 _____

What I love about my body:

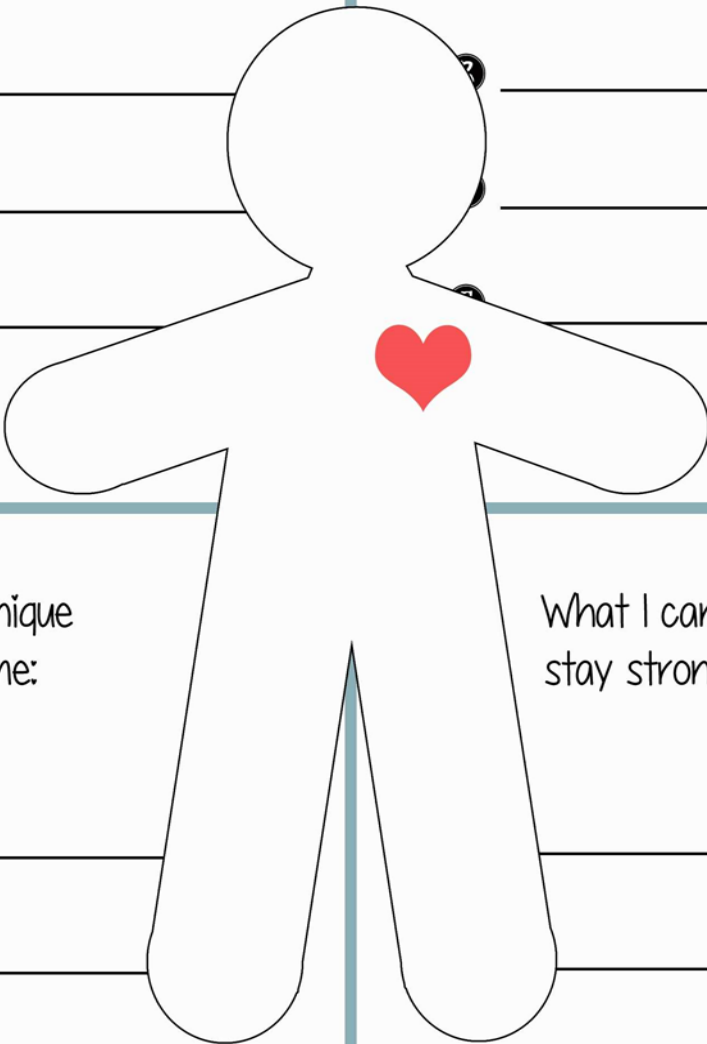
- 1 _____
- 2 _____
- 3 _____
- 4 _____
- 5 _____

What's unique about me:

- 1 _____
- 2 _____
- 3 _____
- 4 _____
- 5 _____

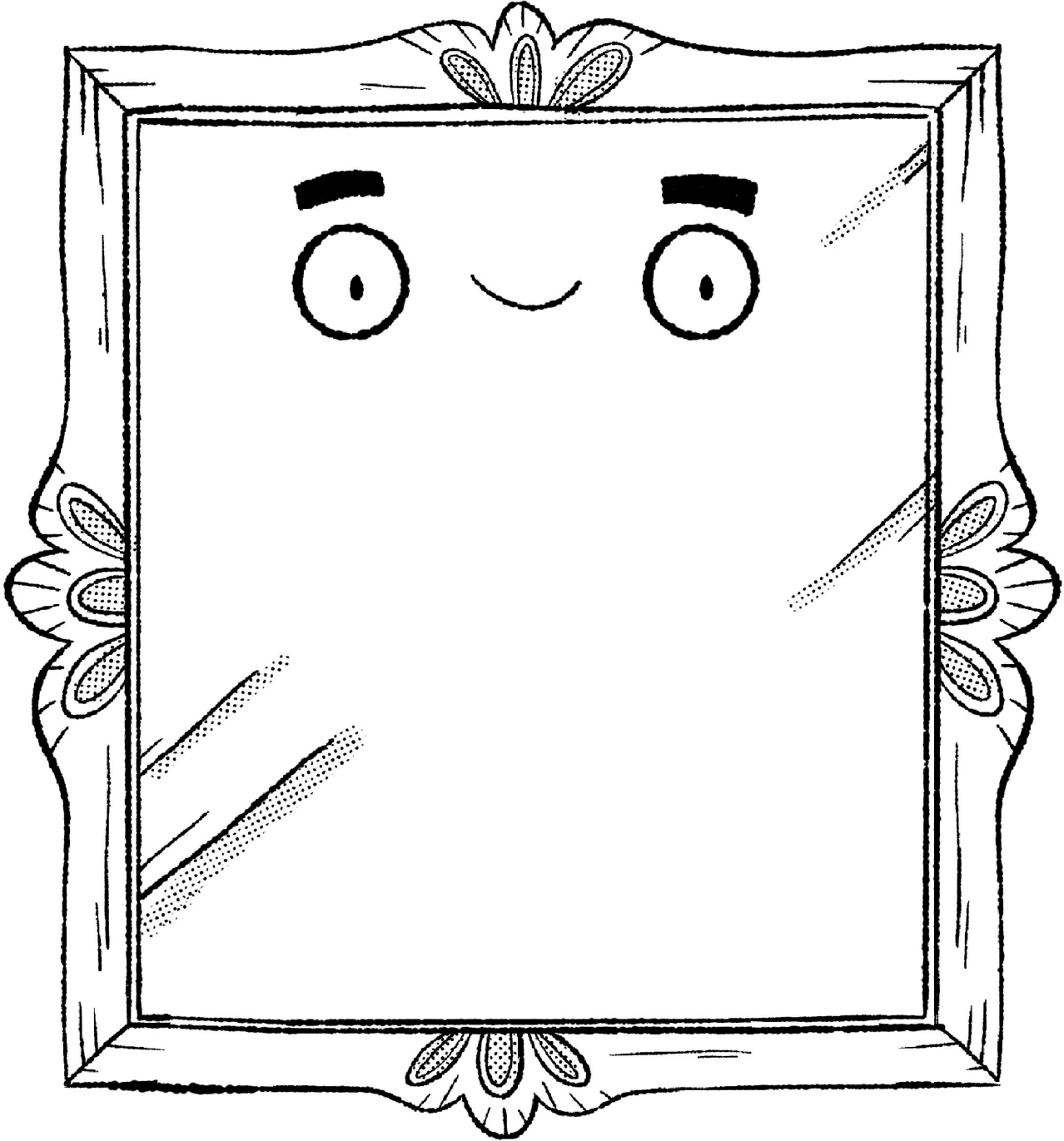
What I can do to help it stay strong and healthy:

- 1 _____
- 2 _____
- 3 _____
- 4 _____
- 5 _____



WHAT I SEE IN THE MIRROR?

- 1** WRITE IN THIS MIRROR EVERY SINGLE THOUGHT THAT YOU HAVE ABOUT YOUR APPEARANCE



- 2** CROSS OUT ALL OF THE NEGATIVE THOUGHTS AND WRITE THE OPPOSITE STATEMENT UNDERNEATH IT.

- 3** SAY THE POSITIVE STATEMENTS ALOUD TO YOURSELF AS YOU LOOK IN THE MIRROR

Have a conversation with your children about the things that they like about themselves. If they struggle to identify their positive traits give them some suggestions

5 THINGS THAT I LIKE ABOUT MYSELF...

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

4) _____

5) _____

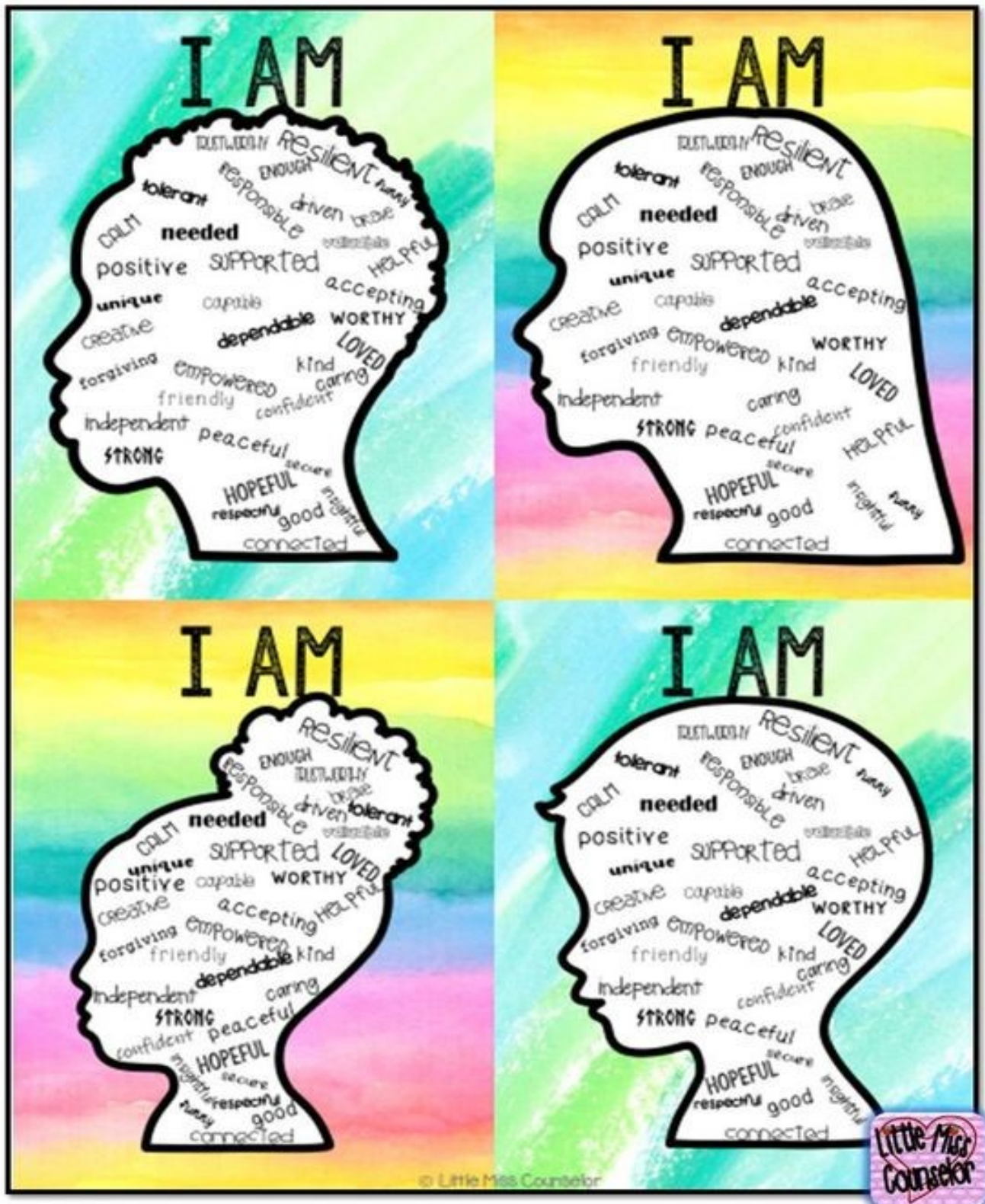


Make a cloud pattern and cut strips of colourful paper. Brainstorm adjectives for each letter of the alphabet. When done, we chose adjectives for each letter of your first names. You could try doing this for each family member

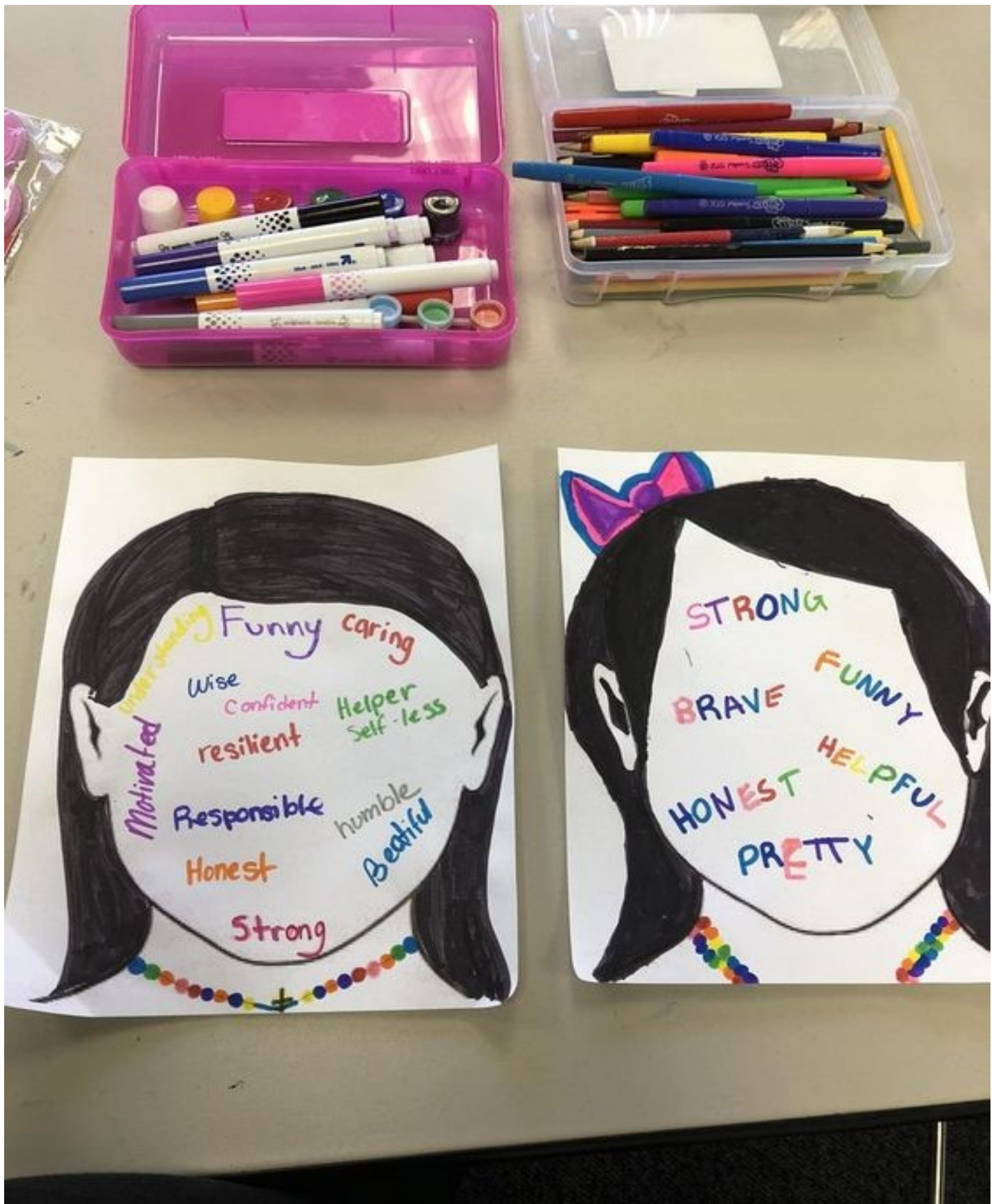


Use this worksheet to see positive traits and use this to lead onto discussions surrounding self worth.

SELF WORTH



This is an adaptation of the previous activity . This version may be more effective for younger children



Sources of Support

Online Support—The following organisations can provide advice and guidance for children and young people and many offer advice and for parents/carers.

Mind - provide advice and support to empower anyone experiencing a mental health problem.
<https://www.mind.org.uk/>

The Mix - <https://www.themix.org.uk/mental-health>

Young Minds - UK's leading charity fighting for children and young people's mental health.
<https://youngminds.org.uk/>

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

Kooth – Free, safe and anonymous online support for young people.
<https://www.kooth.com/>

NHS - <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/anxiety-in-children/>

The Dock Swindon - The Dock is a new and different way for young people to find out about services that are here to help them in Swindon. <https://thedockswindon.co.uk/>

Friends of STEP Facebook Page - Here you can find useful resources covering a variety of topics

Useful Telephone Numbers

Be U Swindon - At BeU Swindon, we believe in the power of togetherness. Our Collaborative Care model brings together experts from different fields, ensuring that every child and young person receives a holistic approach to their well-being.

Tel - 01793781484, Website - <https://beuswindon.co.uk>

CAMHS (children and adolescent mental health services) - help children, young people and their families across Swindon, Wiltshire, Bath & NE Somerset who are experiencing more severe, complex and persistent mental health difficulties. Tel - 01865 903422 (Swindon)

Useful online videos

Self esteem and body image—<https://hampshirecamhs.nhs.uk/issue/body-image-self-esteem/>

Dove self esteem project—<https://www.dove.com/uk/dove-self-esteem-project/help-for-parents.html>