

# Self-Esteem Discussion Points

## 1. What does self-esteem mean?

- liking yourself
- being proud of things you've done
- knowing how you're special and unique
- knowing you're a good person
- knowing you are and deserve to be cared for
- knowing you belong
- believing you are capable of achieving and succeeding
- knowing you can be helpful to others ...

## 2. Does having positive self-esteem mean you are stuck-up, or that you think you are better than everyone else? Does it mean you are never nervous? Or that your feelings never get hurt when people say mean things about you?

- No! People with positive self-esteem can talk openly about their strengths, but also their weaknesses. They don't have to brag or exaggerate to impress others because they don't need others to tell them they're OK.
- NO! Everyone gets nervous. People with positive self-esteem are confident enough to challenge themselves and try new things, so they do get nervous. They know that whatever happens, they're fine and will learn from it.
- NO! Cruel words and teasing are always hurtful. But people with good self-esteem can recognize the feeling, shake it off, and move on. They know that unkind words or deeds say more about the other person than about themselves.

## 3. How might a person with healthy self-esteem act?

- cheerful
- willing to try new things
- able to stand up for himself or herself
- helpful and kind to others
- accept disappointment without overreacting
- willing to show honest feelings
- not always have to be "the best" at everything
- able to think independently and be different
- take and give turns fairly ...

## 4. How might a person with low self-esteem act?

- very shy
- afraid to try new things and risk ridicule or failure
- often angry
- mean to others
- need to be "the best" or most popular
- care too much what others think
- afraid to stand out or be different ...
- bullies others, trying to hurt or control others to avoid showing their insecurities or being hurt by others first.

## 5. Name some things that a person might not like about himself or herself; that might make someone feel bad about himself or herself.

- Some people don't like the way they look—their height, weight, skin or hair color, facial features, body shape, clothes ...
- Some think they are not smart enough, or that others won't like them because they're too smart.
- Some people are not physically strong, graceful, or athletic.

- Some have an illness or disability that makes it hard to do things others can do.
- Some have families where everyone else is good at many things and they think they can't measure up.
- Some don't have much money or don't live in a fancy house or have expensive things to show off.
- Some are very shy or have trouble communicating with others.
- Some are embarrassed because their bodies are developing slower, or faster, than their peers'.
- Some feel weak or ashamed because someone powerful is unfairly controlling them or making them do things they know are wrong.
- Some are embarrassed by family members who have problems they don't want others to know about.
- Some just think that they're not "cool" enough, and that the popular kids have better lives than they do.

**6.**

### **Why do some people have low self-esteem?**

- When people are often criticized or made fun of at home or school, they may think they don't deserve to be treated better.
- When people have trouble accomplishing things that others can do, they may doubt their abilities or their worth.
- People who stand out as different—who have difficulty learning, struggle with physical disabilities or illnesses, who are seen as too fat or thin, too tall or short, "the wrong color," "dumb" or too smart, poor or rich and spoiled, "the wrong" religion or ethnicity—can be targets for cruel teasing or unrealistic expectations that make them feel bad about themselves.

**7.**

### **Why is good self-esteem important?**

- It gives us confidence to see our potential and be our best.
- It gives us confidence to take reasonable risks and try new things.
- It lets us use our energy to do good things for ourselves and for others, instead of tying up our energy and abilities in self-doubt and unhappiness.
- It helps us take disappointments and failures in stride so we can learn from them and move on rather than getting stuck and not growing.
- It gives us a reason to take good care of ourselves.
- It makes us want to be kind and helpful to others.
- When we stand up for ourselves against bullies, we can help them stop behaving badly.
- See pages 96–97 of *Stick up for Yourself!* for more ideas.

**8.**


### **How can we build our own self-esteem?**

- Talk to ourselves in honest ways that credit our talents and achievements and accept our mistakes.
- Do things that make us feel proud of ourselves.
- Take good care of our bodies.
- Take time to be sure we are clean, neat, and well-groomed.
- Set realistic goals and persevere to achieve them.
- Go out of our way to be helpful to others.
- Never pick on others.
- Decide for ourselves what we believe and think about things and stand up for our ideas.
- Do what we think is right even when it's hard.
- Discover our talents by trying lots of different activities ...

**9.**

### **How can we help others develop positive self-esteem?**

- Honestly praise and complement them.
- Never pick on people or exclude them.
- Invite new people to join you and your friends in an activity.
- Make the effort to get to know many people rather than just a few close friends.
- Don't judge people on their appearance alone—look deeper to good qualities of character.
- Don't prejudge people because of a group they're part of—treat them as individuals.
- Don't push others to do what they don't think is right or don't want to do.
- Encourage others to try new things and support their efforts.
- Never bully, gossip, or tell lies about anyone ...



# Self-Esteem Theme Book Discussion Guide

Gather with classmates who read the same book and discuss the questions below. Be prepared to summarize your group's thoughts for the class and to offer your opinion about recommending this book to others.

**Title and author of my book:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Time and place of the story:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Who are the main characters? Describe each briefly:** \_\_\_\_\_

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**Summarize the story in one paragraph:** \_\_\_\_\_

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**Describe the main character's self-image. What does the main character like and not like about himself or herself? Why does this character have self-esteem problems?**

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**What happens in the story to help or harm the main character's sense of self-worth?**

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Does the main character become stronger, more confident, and more self-assured by the end of the story? If so, how does this change come about? \_\_\_\_\_

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Identify and describe one other character in the story who struggles with poor self-esteem:

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Share one new idea you learned from this book about the concept or importance of self-esteem:

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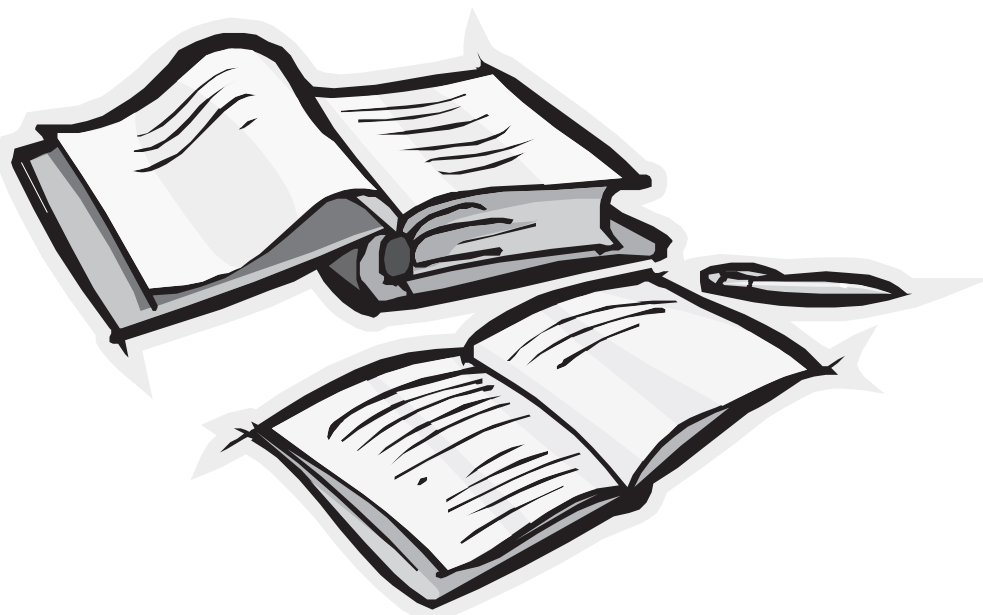
Would you recommend this book to friends? Why or why not? \_\_\_\_\_


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# Sample Self-Image Journal Assignments

- Write ten adjectives that describe you. Count how many are positive and how many are negative.
  - Write ten adjectives others might use to describe you. Count the negatives and positives.
  - Draw a smiley face and write about a time when you felt really good about yourself. Draw a frowning face and write about a time when you felt bad about yourself.
  - How do you talk to yourself, either silently or when no one is listening? Are your comments positive or negative? Positive self-talk helps you stay strong and happy. Write ten affirmations or positive comments to repeat to yourself throughout the week. Start with “I am ...” or “I like the way I ...”
  - Look at yourself in a mirror. What features do you like best about your body? Least? Write about your best feature and explain why you like it. How does it look? What does it do for you? Do the same for your worst feature. Read what you’ve written and think about whether you’re judging your body more by appearance or function. Do you think this way of evaluating your body is helpful and healthy?
  - Write a letter to yourself, to be read a year from today. Include what you’re doing and how you’re feeling, your favorite people and things, and your dreams and goals. Talk about what you’re proud of and what you want to do better. Mark the letter with a sticky note, and read it in a year!
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