

Who I Am

SUMMARY

Objective: To help students understand that self-awareness is an important component to making choices about substance use and gambling.

Process: Students will explore the different qualities of healthy and unhealthy self-esteem, and their links to resiliency. They will complete a personal inventory that focuses on linking self-awareness to self-esteem, and on the relationship between self-esteem and substance use and gambling.

This lesson is one in a series of Grade 8 lessons. If you aren't able to teach all the lessons, try pairing this lesson with the "Healthy Relationships," "Media Influences" or "Peer Influence" lessons.

LESSON OBJECTIVES

- increase awareness of peers, family and media as influences on personal decision making
- identify personal values and how substance use or gambling fits with personal values
- understand the concept of personal resiliency
- understand the role self-esteem plays in leading a healthy life and developing healthy attitudes about the way you look, feel and act

CONTENT AND TIME (45-MINUTE LESSON)

- 7.1 Introduction to Self-esteem (20 minutes)
- 7.2 Personal Inventory: This is who I am (20 minutes)
- 7.3 Closure: Key Messages (5 minutes)

Teaching about substance use and gambling can and should cross all subjects. Here are a few suggestions for use in other subjects.

REQUIRED MATERIALS

Beach ball

Worksheet: This Is Who I Am

LINKS TO SUBJECTS

- **Language Arts:** Write a short essay, poem or story about who you are and how self-awareness prepares you to make healthy choices.
- **Art:** Use different art media to represent who you are.
- **Career and Technology Studies:** Use a computer application to create a brochure with information learned.

7.1 Introduction: Self-esteem

(20 minutes)

In this initial discussion you will assist your students in understanding more about self-esteem, including how to

- identify the influences on self-esteem
- develop strategies for learning how to accept themselves
- make changes in how they see themselves

Ask students to define self-esteem, and brainstorm characteristics that might indicate healthy or unhealthy levels of self-esteem. Self-esteem is a confidence or satisfaction in oneself that doesn't depend on the judgment or opinions of others. A person with healthy self-esteem knows that they can make mistakes and still feel OK about themselves, and that it's OK if some people dislike them. Consider some other ways a person with a healthy (and unhealthy) level of self-esteem would think, feel and behave. Record student responses using a table organized by healthy and unhealthy levels of self-esteem, with the corresponding thoughts, feelings and types of behaviour underneath.

Introduce the visual concept of self-esteem using the beach ball.¹ By using a beach ball to represent self-esteem, you will be demonstrating the pressures and effects that daily life has on the way we feel about ourselves, and on our innate ability to be resilient.

Hold the inflated beach ball in front of the class. Show the group how resilient the ball is. You can push in one side and it will pop back to its original shape. You can drop it on floor and it will bounce back up.

¹From *More Activities That Teach* (pp. 120–121), by T. Jackson, 1995, Cedar City, UT: Red Rock Publishing. Copyright 1995 by Tom Jackson. Adapted with permission.

Ask the class to list things that might happen during a normal day that would negatively affect a person's self-esteem. Some responses may include the following:

- doing poorly on an exam
- having acne
- hearing sarcastic comments from friends about what you are wearing

Let some air out of the beach ball for each thing the class calls out. Be sure to limit the amount of air you let out for each item; you want to stop once about one-third to half of the air has been let out.

When you have let out enough air, once again push against the side of the beach ball, and let the students see whether the ball returns to its original shape. Then drop the ball and point out that it does not bounce anymore. Discuss the effect each situation has on our self-esteem, and in turn how that affects how we look, feel, think and behave. Ask the class whether low self-esteem is permanent, and lead a discussion of ways to raise our self-esteem (e.g., positive feedback, recognition and encouragement). Blow some air into the beach ball for each way the class calls out, until it is full again. Finally, lead a discussion of who can help us to raise our self-esteem, and how we can help others.

7.2 Personal Inventory: This is who I am

(20 minutes)

Every student has to learn how to relate and bond with a peer group, while still holding on to their own values and identity. Students who are confident and secure in themselves may be better equipped to deal with the pressures of growing up.

Our ability to bounce back from difficult situations is not static throughout life. Each of us will have more or less strength at different times in our life and in response to different situations. It is our positive relationships, and our sense of personal power and competencies, that will allow us to reach out when we need additional support.

The first step in building self-esteem is having a realistic idea of oneself: strengths and weaknesses, likes and dislikes. Self-awareness helps to lay the foundation for healthy self-esteem.

Tell students that they are going to complete a personal inventory worksheet to help them achieve better self-awareness. (The worksheet, entitled “This Is Who I Am,” is attached at the end of this lesson.)

After the students have completed the worksheet, ask them to take the information they learned about themselves and create a drawing, collage, short essay, poem or story that illustrates who they are. Then have them answer the following journal questions and attach the answers to their creative depiction of themselves.

- What did you learn about yourself? How can you apply this information to your life?
- How does this knowledge affect the goals you will set for yourself?
- How do others affect my self-esteem?
- What role does healthy self-esteem play in leading a balanced and healthy life?
- What is the relationship between self-esteem and getting involved with substances and gambling?
- What are some of the challenges we face when trying to develop healthy self-esteem?

7.3 Closure: Key Messages

(5 minutes)

Explain to your students that having a strong and healthy sense of self, and choosing to surround ourselves with positive and supportive friends, will reduce the risk that we will make unhealthy choices about the use of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs, and about gambling. Students need to be active participants in making their life what they want it to be. They can make conscious choices. They can develop healthy attitudes about the way they look, feel and act. They can understand that their self-esteem doesn't hinge on what others think of them. And they can be empowered to make healthy and informed choices as they travel through their adolescence.

Worksheet: This Is Who I Am

The first step in building your self-esteem is having a realistic idea of you: your strengths and weaknesses, likes and dislikes. Knowing who you are helps you to like who you are. And that's a big part of having healthy self-esteem.

Complete the following sentences to best describe who you are.

I am ...

All my life I have wanted to ...

I feel most like me when ...

I feel least like me when ...

I get angry when ...

I am most proud of ...

I feel strongest when ...

I feel good when I remember ...

.....

When I'm alone I feel ...

.....

Most people don't know that I ...

.....

Never, ever call me a ...

.....

The thing I would change most about me is ...

.....

The best part of me is ...

.....

After you have completed this worksheet, take the information you have learned about yourself and create a drawing, collage, short essay, poem or story that illustrates who you are.

Once your creation is done, answer the following journal questions and attach your answers to it.

1. What did you learn about yourself?
How can you apply this information to your life?
2. How does this knowledge affect the goals you will set for yourself?
3. How do others affect my self-esteem?
4. What role does healthy self-esteem play in leading a balanced and healthy life?
5. What is the relationship between self-esteem and getting involved with substances and gambling?
6. What are some of the challenges we face when trying to develop healthy self-esteem?